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ABSTRACT

Thirteen lessons on aging in America, appropriate for the secondary school level, are presented. Each lesson is designed to take approximately one day and includes the goal, objectives, background information, reproducible student handouts, materials and equipment needed, procedures, and evaluation forms. In the first lesson students examine their feelings and beliefs about aging. Subsequent lessons identify changing demographic and social characteristics of older people in the United States, examine the diversity of the older population, determine criteria for judging "oldness," and analyze growing older in the United States through examining popular song lyrics. Also, students discuss the effects of age-grading (the process of judging certain behaviors as appropriate or inappropriate for certain age-groups), the mass media as reinforcers of age stereotypes, and the needs and problems of older people, including their housing needs. Other topics include the role of work in society and its impact on the older population, the validity of pervasive age stereotypes, and methods for improving the quality of life for older Americans. A three-page test of concepts and issues and a list of teacher resources conclude the document. (KC)

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AGING IN AMERICA: FACT, FICTION AND FEELING

By

Mary Strubbe

SO 012 279

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INTRODUCTION

UNIT TOPIC: Aging in America: Facts, Fiction and Feelings

INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL: Secondary

RATIONALE: The older segment of our population lives in a social climate that questions their productivity and usefulness. Failure to acknowledge the diversity of the older population relegates them to stereotypic roles. The pervasiveness of age-stereotyping and a growing elderly population necessitate efforts to foster accurate perceptions of aging and the aged.

UNIT GOALS:

1. To assist students in assessing their perceptions of older people. What beliefs and attitudes do students hold about older people?
2. To increase the knowledge adolescents have about aging and the aged. Who are the elderly and what are their needs and concerns?
3. To sensitize adolescents to societal sources of age concept. What is it like to grow old in America and how can these conditions be improved?

VOCABULARY: The following terms are discussed in the unit and should be understood by students.

demography	stereotypes
roles	ageism (age-stereotyping)
role conflict	age-grading (age-stratification)

ORGANIZATION OF THE UNIT

The unit is divided into 13 lessons. Each lesson is designed to take approximately one day, although this should be adapted to meet the needs of individual teachers and students. Each lesson includes the following teacher directions (these are color coded white): *

GOAL: This is a broad statement of the purpose and scope of the lesson.

OBJECTIVES: These are specific statements expressed behaviorally that describe desired student outcomes.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: This section briefly discusses information pertinent to the lesson's activities. It serves as a teacher introduction to the topic and goes beyond information contained in student materials. If desired, the teacher can use information found in this section to expand upon student materials.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT NEEDED: All materials needed to teach the lesson are listed in this section. Copies of student handouts are color coded yellow and follow each lesson.

PROCEDURES: This section provides directions on how to use the materials. It includes "What did you find out?" and "What do you think?" questions. These questions serve as guidelines for conducting follow-up discussions. The questions are merely suggestive and should be adapted to meet student needs and interests.

EVALUATION: Four separate evaluation forms are provided for teachers to assess student progress towards meeting unit goals. One instrument, "Older Americans," assesses students' knowledge regarding older people.

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* The lesson format is adapted from Resource Material Development: Population Dynamics in Eighth Grade American History (Tallahassee, Florida: Florida State University, 1974).

"Old People Scales" and "The Aging Semantic Differential" assess attitudes toward the elderly. These three instruments can be administered as pre- and posttests for determining knowledge gains and attitude changes. The two attitude instruments should not be graded, but used merely for informational purposes. The fourth instrument, "Aging in America: A Test of Concepts and Issues," is designed as a summative evaluation instrument to be used upon completion of the unit. Any activities in the unit may also be used for evaluative purposes. The evaluation instruments follow the lessons and are color coded blue.

Lesson 1: Feelings and Beliefs About Aging

Goal: To assess one's perceptions of older people.

Objectives: -- To identify personal beliefs about the elderly by analyzing descriptive terms.

-- To identify personal feelings toward growing old and the elderly by responding to questions about these attitudes.

-- To formulate five hypotheses regarding the older population based on personal beliefs and feelings.

Background Information:

A recent national Louis Harris poll (1975) examined attitudes of old and young people toward aging. Over 4,000 individuals, aged 18 and over were interviewed. Responses revealed a discrepancy between the "expectations of old age and the reality."

Some of the discrepancies revealed by the poll included: younger people citing more negative items in describing the "worst things about being over 65" as compared to older respondents; older people viewing themselves as more useful to the community than perceived by young people; and the public underestimating the mental acuity of people over sixty-five. The public under sixty-five viewed the elderly as less bright, less open-minded, and less capable of accomplishing things than did the over age sixty-five group.

The findings of the Louis Harris poll underscore the extensiveness of age-stereotyping. Individuals in the 18-24 age category held the most negative views of old people. Although this poll did not investigate the feelings and beliefs of those under 18, other studies have reported the negative attitudes toward old age and the elderly frequently held by youth.

This activity attempts to identify how students perceive the elderly. What characteristics or stereotyped images are associated with aging and the aged? No attempt is made in this activity to verify students' perceptions, but merely to collect impressions.

Materials and Equipment Needed:

- Blackboard
- Student handout, "Feelings About Old Age"

Procedures:

1. Direct students to brainstorm terms or characteristics that they feel describe the aged. Record all words on the blackboard. For each term, ask students if it has a positive, negative or neutral connotation. Place a "+" next to the term if it has a positive connotation, a "-" if the connotation is negative, or a "0" if the term appears neutral.

   What did you find out?

   1. What does this activity reveal about your attitudes toward old people?
   2. What factors helped shape your images of the elderly?

2. As a class activity, have students categorize the terms, e.g. which terms refer to physical traits, mental abilities, attitudes, etc. Rearrange all terms under the appropriate category. What generalizations can be made regarding students' beliefs and feelings about old people?

3. Direct students to make five hypotheses about old people based upon the terms discussed (e.g. most old people are physically infirm; old people enjoy talking about the "good old days;" older people become senile; etc.) This can be completed individually, in small groups or as a class activity. Upon completion of the activity, instruct students to save their lists of hypotheses for use the following day.

   What do you think?

   1. Do most old people conform to the descriptions contained in your hypotheses?
   2. Can you think of an older person(s) who does not fit the description?
   3. What further information is needed to test your hypotheses?

4. Distribute copies of "Feelings About Old Age." * Students can answer these questions in class or at home. Tell students that these forms will not be collected or graded and are for personal reference only.

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* From Gary Smith's Comparative View of Aging(Denver: Center for Teaching International Relations, University of Denver, 1976), page 9. Reprinted with permission.

FEELINGS ABOUT OLD AGE

1. Name 2 things that worry you about growing old.

2. Name 2 things that you feel would be "neat" about growing old.

3. Name 2 things that you dislike about old people.

4. Name 2 things that you like about old people.

5. To what age would you like to live?

Lesson 2: Who are the elderly? Social and Demographic Characteristics

Goal: To identify changing demographic and social characteristics of older people in the United States.

Objectives: -- To apply table and graph interpretation skills in identifying demographic and social characteristics of the elderly.

-- To identify demographic differences between older men and women by interpreting statistical data.

-- To generate five hypotheses about the characteristics of old people in the U.S. based on statistical data.

-- To compare and contrast hypotheses about older people based on personal feelings and beliefs with those based on statistical data.

Background Information:

Who are the elderly? Myths and stereotyped images often comprise students' perceptions of the elderly. This activity establishes a factual framework for studying about the aged. Census data is examined in determining current population trends and characteristics of the elderly.

Approximately one of every nine Americans is age 65 or older (22.9 million men and women). The growth of the older population is dramatized when compared to the three million elderly in 1900. Since 1900 the percentage of people over 65 has more than doubled. Over one third (38%) of the older population is classified as old-old, age 75 or older. Future population projections estimate an older population of 31.8 million in the year 2000 (12.2% of a projected population of 260 million people).

Three main factors contribute to this increasing older population (Harris, 1978:8).

- The high birth rate of the late 19th and early 20th centuries has served to augment dramatically the number of persons who have reached the age of 65 in recent decades.

- The high immigration rate prior to World War I served to further augment the number of individuals in this group.

- Dramatic increases in life expectancy during the 20th century served to increase the number of persons reaching age 65 and those reaching the upper age brackets.

Any factors that diminish the size of the younger population serve to increase the proportion of older people. As birth rates decline and fewer young people immigrate to the United States, the proportion of older people increases. Fertility, mortality and migration affect the size of all age groups.

It should be noted that the increase in life expectancy occurs mainly at birth and not in the upper age categories. More people are surviving to age 65, but life expectancy gains for those over 65 have remained relatively stable.

The elderly population is constantly changing in composition and characteristics. "Approximately 5,000 persons reach their 65th birthdays daily; at the same time, 3,600 persons in the same age group die"(Harris, 1978:8). Thus, education levels, income, sex ratios and other social characteristics of older people are not static. Census data on individuals born in 1935 reveals that when these people reach their 65th birthdays in the year 2000, they will be better educated and more female dominated than those presently in this age category. Noting the dynamic nature of the over age 65 group is critical to understanding the diversity of the older population.

Materials and Equipment Needed:

- Class copies of Tables 1-5 (or overhead transparencies of the tables)
- Students' lists of hypotheses from lesson 1

Procedures:

1. Distribute copies of tables 1-5 to students. Using the teacher's discussion guide, interpret and analyze the tables. This activity can be conducted by dividing students into groups or as a class activity.

2. After viewing and discussing the statistical data, instruct students to make five hypotheses regarding the older population (e.g. the majority of elderly are women; most older people do not have incomes below the federal poverty level; densely populated states tend to have large numbers of old people living there; etc.). Students can formulate hypotheses individually, in small groups, or as a class activity.

What do you think?

1. Do all older people conform to the hypotheses generated from the statistical data?
2. Can you think of an older person(s) who does not fit the description?
3. What conclusions can you make about generalizing from statistical data?

3. Instruct students to take out the hypotheses they generated in lesson one. Compare and contrast the hypotheses based on initial feelings and beliefs with the hypotheses developed from statistical data.

What did you find out?

1. How are they similar? Different?
2. Hypothesize on possible explanations for differences.
3. Where did you acquire inaccurate images of the elderly?

NOTE:

Distribute copies of the "Observer's Report Form" accompanying lessons 7 and 8. See page 36 for directions.

TEACHER'S DISCUSSION GUIDE TO TABLES 1-5

Table 1

How much did the aged population increase from 1900 to 1976? What percentage increase does this represent? What trend is revealed in Table 1? What factors may be responsible for more people living longer? What percent of the U.S. population was 65 and over in 1976? Is this percentage higher, lower or about what you expected? Compare the number of aged men and women from 1900 to 1976. What trend is revealed? Hypothesize why women tend to live longer than men. What percentage of the elderly were aged 75 and over in 1900? in 1976? What trend does this reveal? Why might more people be surviving to join the ranks of the old-old(those 75 and over)?

Table 2

What percentage of the total elderly population is contained within these seven states? (Compare the total with the figure given in Table 1). Are these states densely or sparsely populated? Why might such large numbers of older people live in these states? (They are the most populated states, thus, logically more old people would reside there). Why does Florida have a large proportion of elderly people?

Table 3

Which group has the largest proportion of people over 65? What might account for the shorter life expectancy of blacks and Spanish?

Table 4

What is the marital status of most older men? of most older women? What accounts for this difference? (Women tend to outlive their husbands).

Table 5

What percentage of people over 65 have incomes below the poverty level? Compare the proportion of elderly "poor" with the "poor" of the population under age 65. What group reveals the lowest income in Table 5? Can a person whose income is above the poverty

level still be faced with economic problems? Explain. What effect does inflation have on the expenditure patterns of an elderly couple living on a fixed income? How does the income level of older people affect other aspects of their lives, e.g. housing, nutrition, transportation, health and general quality of life?

WHO ARE THE ELDERLY?

Table 1 Older Population in the Twentieth Century (65+)

Year	Total (000's)	% of Total Population	Men (000's)	Women (000's)	Ratio Wm/Men	% of Elderly 75 and Over (old-old)
1900	3,080	4.1	1,555	1,525	98/100	29.0
1930	6,634	5.4	3,325	3,309	100/100	29.0
1970	19,972	9.8	8,367	11,605	139/100	37.8
1976	22,934	10.7	9,364	13,571	145/100	38.1
2000	31,822	12.2-12.9	12,717	19,105	150/100	-

Table 2 Estimated Population Aged 65+ for Selected States

State	Population Over 65	% 65 and Over*
California	2,121,000	9.7
Florida	1,383,000	16.4
New York	2,068,000	11.2
Illinois	1,171,000	10.3
Ohio	1,089,000	9.9
Pennsylvania	1,404,000	11.6
Texas	1,193,000	9.5
Total	10,429,000	

Table 3 Population 65 and Over by Race and Ethnic Origin

Race or Ethnic Group	Proportion 65 and Over
White	11%
Blacks	8%
Spanish	4%

* Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports Special Studies, Series P-23, No. 59, May 1976, p. 19.

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Table 4 Distribution of Older Persons by Marital Status, 1976

Status	Men(%)	Women(%)
Total.....	100	100
Married.....	79	39
Widowed.....	14	53
Single or Divorced	8	9

Source for Tables 1-4: Facts About Older Americans 1977
DHEW Pub. No. (OHD) 78-20006

Table 5 Number and Proportion of Persons in Households with Incomes Below the Poverty Level, All Ages and 65+, by Race and Family Status, 1975 (numbers in thousands)

Race and Family Status	All Ages		65+	
	Number	%	Number	%
Total, all races.....	25,877	12.3	3,317	15.3
In families.....	20,789	10.9	1,192	8.0
Unrelated individuals	5,088	25.1	2,125	31.0
White.....	17,770	9.7	2,634	11.4
In families.....	13,799	8.3	898	6.7
Unrelated individuals	3,972	22.7	1,736	28.0
Black.....	7,545	31.3	652	36.3
In families.....	6,533	30.1	286	23.9
Unrelated individuals	1,011	42.1	366	61.1

Source: Herman B. Brotman, "Income and Poverty in the Older Population in 1975," The Gerontologist, XVII, No. 1 (1977), 25, quoting U.S. Bureau of the Census data.

Lesson 3: Diversity of the Older Population

Goal: To recognize the diversity of the older population.

Objectives: -- To identify the terms stereotype and age-stereotype through a class discussion.

-- To investigate cultural contributions of older people by conducting an independent study.

-- To conclude that aging and adaptation to old age are highly individual processes revealing a great deal of variation based on an independent activity, a film, and other unit activities.

Background Information:

Stereotyping is the act of categorically assigning certain attributes to a human group which level individual differences and are based on insufficient knowledge. Ageism (age-stereotyping) refers to a specific type of stereotyping, that is, stereotyping based on a person's age. Like all forms of stereotyping, this leads to overgeneralizations that level individual differences. People reaching their 65th birthday often find themselves labeled unproductive and relegated to peripheral social roles. They become viewed as "burdens" and not as resources. These views reflect common age-stereotypes found in our society.

Stereotypes can be either positive or negative. An example of a positive age-stereotype is assuming that people become serene in old age. A negative stereotype is found in the assumption that old age inevitably leads to senility.

In reality, older people represent a diverse group of individuals. Age does not act as a leveler of differences, but often intensifies differences. Furthermore, studies investigating personality patterns found that an individual's personality usually displays considerable continuity throughout life. Thus, an active, extrovertive 45 year-old will likely reveal these traits at age sixty-five.

Materials and Equipment Needed:

- The film, "What Do You Want To Be When You Grow Old?" (available from Pfizer Pharmaceutical Co.)
- Student copies of the "Older Americans: A Diverse Group of Individuals" assignment.

Procedures:

1. Introduce the term stereotype. Inform students that the rest of this unit will focus on common stereotypes about older people. Conduct a discussion on the meaning of stereotyping and age-stereotyping. The following questions serve as a discussion guide.

What do you think?

1. Cite the following examples of stereotypes:
   - Blacks can dance well because they have rhythm.
   - Poor people are that way because they are too lazy to do anything about it.
   - Teenagers are disrespectful to their elders.
   - Athletes tend to be all brawn and no brain.

   Who is subject to stereotyping? (human groups)
2. Are these stereotypes true or false? Explain.
3. Why do we frequently stereotype other people?
4. In what ways is stereotyping harmful?
5. Can you think of any stereotypes that are based on a person's age, e.g. children, teenagers, middle-aged people, the elderly? (Inform students that stereotyping based on one's age is referred to as age-stereotyping or ageism).

2. Show the film, What Do You Want To Be When You Grow Old?" (25 minutes) A synopsis of the film follows. Discuss the following questions:

What did you find out?

1. How did people in the film adapt to growing old?
2. Is there only one pattern of adapting to old age? Are there patterns that were not shown in this film? If so, what are they?
3. What age-stereotypes were revealed?

What do you think?

1. What is meant by "successful adaptation" to old age?
2. Can you think of any people aged 65 or over that you know personally? How have they adapted to growing old?
3. Discuss Dr. Robert Butler's statement that the increasing older population "is not just a problem, it's a triumph."

3. Distribute copies of the assignment, "Older Americans: A Diverse Group of Individuals." Review the directions with students. These projects are due at the end of the unit (approximately 1½ weeks).

"WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW OLD?"
A SYNOPSIS *

This film emphasizes the positive aspects of aging -- as expressed by older persons who have successfully dealt with the process. Some of the individuals portrayed include:

-- a 92 year-old male lawyer who has enrolled in a French class

-- an 86 year-old woman

-- Charles Harris (age 90), a piano player

-- Ira Chief (age 80) who comments: "You can live alone if you make yourself live alone...if you learn to enjoy it....I enjoy life."

-- a former assistant postmaster (age 83 and widowed) comments on trying to establish and maintain his independence

-- a former school teacher who was forced to retire at age 65 comments on her reactions to forced retirement

-- Carl Wallace (age 73) continues to work as an auto mechanic despite his "retirement" and explains why

-- residents from the River Garden Nursing Home participate in a play

-- members of a New York City Senior Community Center are shown engaging in various activities

The film focuses on workable solutions rather than a restatement of the traditional problems. These solutions include new medical approaches to both the physical and mental conditions associated with aging, and concrete programs for coping with specific social and economic problems.

Some of the stereotypes that are discussed include:

• Senility - many cases of senility are reversible (there is no actual organic brain damage) but doctors often

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* Partially excerpted from the Virginia Office on Aging's film list.

neglect this problem by saying "it's just age" (implying that this condition is inevitable and irreversible - both myths).

- Frailty - over 80% of the elderly can participate in their normal daily activities.
- Institutionalization - only 5% of the older population is institutionalized, e.g. nursing homes, mental institutions, homes for the aged, etc.
- Dependency - many old people successfully maintain their independence.

OLDER AMERICANS: A DIVERSE GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS

How many older people do you know personally? What are their hobbies, interests and opinions? How familiar are you with the lives of notable senior citizens? To help you explore these questions you are to select <u>one</u> of the activities listed below. The completed project is to be turned in at the end of this unit on aging.

1. Prepare a report on the life of a famous older person. Some examples are Pablo Picasso, Earl Warren, Pope John Paul II, Arthur Fiedler, Golda Meir, Maggie Kuhn, Fred Astaire, Margaret Mead, Helen Hayes, Claude Pepper. Research such topics as their achievements in old age, the person's attitude toward life, what the individual did in his/her earlier years, etc.

2. Interview an older member of the community. Prior to the interview formulate the questions you intend to ask. Some potential topics include: their life experiences, opinions on current issues, hobbies, interests, reflections on aging, etc. A tape recorder may assist in gathering this information. After completing the interview, write a report containing your findings and your personal reaction to the interview.

3. Design a questionnaire to be given to at least five older people (or you can interview people from different age groups, comparing their responses). The questionnaire should be approved by your teacher before distributing it. Questions might seek information concerning: age, sex, residence, hobbies, career, how they spend their leisure time, knowledge of available local services for old people, opinions about youth, nursing homes, growing old, concerns of older people, the most serious problems facing the elderly, etc. Write a report summarizing your findings and drawing any possible conclusions.

4. Create an album of old people. In it include pictures, news clippings, etc. Report on the availability of materials, how old people are portrayed and your reflections and comments.

5. Design a bulletin board on aging. Contact your teacher about setting up the bulletin board. Write a report describing the significance of your bulletin board design.

6. Collect information on local services for older people. (Your local area agency on aging will be able to provide you with considerable information). Compile this information in a report and discuss what kinds of services are available and what types of services are needed.

7. Create your own project. All such projects must first be approved by your teacher.

Lesson 4: When is someone old?

Goal: To determine one's criteria for judging "oldness."

Objectives: -- To hypothesize on what makes something (someone) both young and old.

-- To identify the characteristics of "oldness" by examining several animate and inanimate objects.

-- To identify the source of using age 65 as an indicator of old age by reading an account.

Background Information:

Individuals reaching their sixty-fifth birthday often find themselves suddenly labeled "old." Our society tends to focus on chronological age as the chief indicator of old age. People in this age category find themselves viewed as unproductive, decrepit, and judged to have little to contribute to society. These stereotyped judgments deny many people over age sixty-five the opportunity to actively participate in society.

In reality, aging is a highly individual process. From the moment a person is born they begin to age. Yet individuals age at different rates and in different manners. One's chronological age is only one factor in determining how "old" a person is. Other forces that affect the aging process include:

- Biological - the body is in a constant state of aging, although rates and manifestations of aging differ between individuals.
- Psychological - sensory and motor functioning, learning, memory, intelligence and creativity comprise the psychological dimensions of aging. These factors influence an individual's adjustment to old age and their mental health.
- Societal - every society designates certain roles and functions that are considered appropriate for different age groups. These roles are reinforced through media and tradition. Societal expectations play an important role in determining how people behave and perceive themselves.

- Behavioral - the integration of the biological, psychological and societal aspects of aging and how they are manifested. An individual's attitude toward aging and life in general affects how he ages.

These aging factors will be examined in greater detail in lessons that follow. The present lesson focuses on the general concept of old - what does it mean and how do we determine when someone is old.

Materials and Equipment Needed:

- Slides depicting examples of old
- Student handout, "Is 65+ Old?"

Procedures:

1. Ask students the question: What makes someone (something) old? young? Record their responses on the blackboard.

2. Show students slides of several objects. After displaying each picture ask: Is this object old? If so, what about this object made you label it old?
   What do you think?
   1. What criteria did you use for judging an object to be old?
   2. Can these same criteria be applied to judging if a person is old? Why or why not?
   3. Are old objects valued or devalued by our society? Name an old object that is valued; one that is devalued.

3. Read each of the accompanying case examples to students. After reading each example ask: Is this person old? If so, what characteristics of this individual made you judge him/her to be old?
   What do you think?
   1. What criteria did you use for judging a person to be old?

4. Distribute copies of "Is 65+ Old" to students. Direct them to read the handout and then ask the following questions:
   What did you find out?
   1. Why was the chronological age of 65 chosen by Bismarck?
   2. What is meant by an "arbitrary age?"
   3. What are the advantages of using age 65 as the definition of old age? the disadvantages?

4. How is age 65 used to determine an individual's social roles?

5 Redirect students' attention to their original responses (on the blackboard) for determining if someone (something) is young or old. Ask them if they would revise these criteria based upon information gained from the previous activities.

What do you think?

1. What makes someone old?
2. Do all people age at the same rate and in the same way? Explain.
3. Is old age a mental and/or a physical condition?

SLIDES FOR DEVELOPING THE CONCEPT OF "OLDNESS"

1. 1959 Dodge
2. 1974 Volkswagon
3. A young tree (about 5 years old)
4. Oak tree estimated to be 300 years old
5. New River - second oldest river in the world (the oldest is the Nile; the New River existed before the mountains it flows through)
6. Old grist mill
7. Covered bridge built in 1916
8. Modern new chair
9. Platform rocker (about 110 years old)
10. A log cabin built around 1920
11. A log cabin built around 1968
12. Freedman's school built right after the Civil War
13. Home built prior to the Civil War
14. House built in 1773
15. House built in 1977
16. House built in 1977

After students make a judgment regarding the "oldness" of the items in slides 6, 7 and 9 ask them if these items are valued by society. Can they think of an old object that is valued? One that is not valued? Why are some old objects valued and others not?

ARE THESE INDIVIDUALS OLD?

1. Maude Tull of Inglewood, California was 85 when she learned to swim and 91 when she learned to drive. Now, at age 103, she still operates her own mortgage business from her home.

2. At age 98, Phan Thi Ly lead 36 other refugees in an attempt to flee from Vietnam. She and her crew spent three days stranded at sea before being rescued by a U.S. Navy frigate.

3. Eric DeReynier became a race-car driver at age 50 and took up hang-gliding when he was 73.

4. Bill Kane, age 81, was selected as "Vaquero of the Year" for defeating competitors from all over the U.S. in a rodeo roping event. Mr. Kane said, "I expect to be around for some time yet."

5. Every morning 81 year-old Hulda Crooks jogs a mile in order to keep in shape for mountain climbing. She has climbed Mount Whitney 16 times since her first climb at age 66. Mrs. Crooks looks "for the good things in life and practice(s) being grateful for all its blessings."

IS 65+ OLD?

by
J. Myron Johnson

In 1889 Otto von Bismarck pushed an historic piece of legislation through a hesitant Reichstag. The legislation was known as the Old Age and Survivors Pension Act. Bismarck was responding to political pressures exerted on him at the time by the aggressive socialist movement in Germany. The legislation represented the first time a federal government in the Western world assumed obligation for the financial support of its older citizens. It was an idea whose time had arrived. Great Britain passed similar legislation in 1908 and other nations followed suit, with the United States introducing the Social Security system in 1935.

Implicit in all of this legislation was the tenet that "old age" had to be defined. While from a legal viewpoint chronological age - an easily calculated, unambiguous figure - seemed a natural enough definition, the choice of the specific age of 65 as the cutoff point for old age appears to have been a very arbitrary one. At the time of the Old Age and Survivors Pension Act, Bismarck himself was a vigorous 74 in full control as first chancellor of the German Empire. The number chosen could just as easily have been 62 or 79 or any other plausible figure. The British Old Age Pension Act used 70 as the cutoff point and later reduced it to 65, which was the number chosen by the United States Social Security Act.

Age 65 has become reasonably well institutionalized in our society as the boundary line between so-called middle and old age. Government statistical tables employing age as a variable routinely use "65 and over" as a classification. Technical articles written by social scientists as well as natural scientists follow the same practice. Theaters and transit companies offer special rates for people over 65; banks and insurance companies attach special importance to that age. The sixty-fifth birthday has become a special, often traumatic event in most of our lives. And apparently, it all goes back to a casual, little-considered decision made nearly 90 years ago in Germany!

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Lesson 5: Attitudes Toward Aging

Goal: To determine what it is like to grow old in the United States.

Objectives: -- To examine data reflecting the role of aging in the U.S. in order to draw conclusions concerning what it is like to grow old in our society.

-- To identify one's feelings toward growing old.

Background Information:

Aging is an inevitable, irreversible and universal process. All participate in the process, with increasing numbers surviving to reach the latter half of life. Yet, while more and more Americans live extended lives, the status of old age declines. Growing old in America often means being relegated to peripheral social roles. Old age is denied a dignified participatory position in society.

Prevalent stereotypes concerning old age serve to reinforce these negative views of aging. Elderly assimilate these societal views, thus, impeding successful adaptation to old age. A social milieu emphasizing youth and disparaging growing old further impedes this adaptation.

Reflections of society's youth orientation can be found in literature, television, advertisements and popular songs. Attempts to preserve a youthful appearance and offering the comment "You don't look your age" as a compliment are further examples of society's emphasis on youth. This youthful orientation fails to acknowledge old age as a natural part of the life cycle - a time of life that is not to be feared.

Youth derive their views of aging from the society in which they live. The image that our society conveys relegates senior citizens to peripheral and nonproductive roles. This activity and the lessons that follow attempt to sensitize students to societal sources of age concept. How is growing old viewed in the United States? Attitudes toward aging, as expressed in songs and statements, form the focus of this lesson.

Materials and Equipment Needed:

- Student handout, "Views of Aging"
- Tape recordings of "When I'm Sixty-Four" and "Hello in There"
- Student copies of the lyrics to these songs

Procedures:

1. Ask students how they developed their attitudes and beliefs about old people. After discussing sources of these attitudes and beliefs distribute copies of "Views of Aging." Discuss what attitudes toward aging these quotations reflect.

   What do you think?

   1. What is the author's attitude toward growing old? Do you agree with this attitude? Why or why not?
   2. What would you conclude about growing old in our society based on these quotations?
   3. Do these quotations supply sufficient information to conclude what it is like to grow old in the United States? Where might you get further information?

2. Discuss how songs reflect the feelings of the times. Ask students to provide examples of songs that reflect (or have reflected) the times. Then play the songs "When I'm Sixty-Four" and "Hello in There." Have students follow the lyrics on the printed handouts.

   What do you think?

   1. What attitude toward growing old is reflected in this song? Does the author look forward to old age or fear it?
   2. What might be reasons that people look forward to old age? reasons for fearing old age?
   3. Do you look forward to growing old? Why or why not?

3. Direct students to complete the following statement. "Growing old is....." Collect student responses but do not grade them.

VIEWS OF AGING

1. It's natural to grow old. You have to become old. You just can't stay young all your life. Growing old is just part of the life cycle.
   - Dewey Thom, Age 12 (Shanks, 1976, p.36)

2. When I grow old, I'd just like to be myself.
   - Anred, Age 11 (Shanks, 1976, p.38)

3. I kind of feel a little detached from all the old people I know, a little scared of them. They're strange. They're different.
   - David, Age 11 (Shanks, 1976, p.38)

4. Youth is a gift of nature, age is a work of art. - Unknown

5. Our society doesn't take care of old people.
   - Anthony Shanks, Age 16 (Shanks, 1976, p.72)

6. Aging is the neglected stepchild of the human life cycle.
   - Robert Butler

7. Old people are babied, they're not treated as equals.
   - Alex, Age 11 (Shanks, 1976, p.38)

8. Let's look at this realistically. Old people have got to accept that they're different. They're not as agile as they once were. So they can't be treated like they always were.
   - Mark, Age 11 (Shanks, 1976, p.39)

9. Old age is neither inherently miserable nor inherently sublime - like every stage of life it has problems, joys, fears and potentials.
   - Robert Butler

10. To be 70 years young is sometimes more hopeful than to be 40 years old.
    - Oliver Wendell Holmes

WHEN I'M SIXTY-FOUR

by

John Lennon and Paul McCartney

When I get older, losing my hair,
Many years from now,
Will you still be sending me a Valentine,
Birthday greetings, bottle of wine?
If I'd been out 'till quarter to three
Would you lock the door?
Will you still need me, will you still feed me,
When I'm sixty-four?
You'll be older, too,
And if you say the word,
I could stay with you.
I could be handy, mending a fuse
When your lights have gone.
You can knit a sweater by the fireside,
Sunday mornings go for a ride;
Doing the garden, digging the weeds,
Who could ask for more?
Will you still need me, will you still feed me,
When I'm sixty-four?
Every summer we can rent a cottage,
In the Isle of Wight, if it's not too dear;
We shall scrimp and save.
Grandchildren on your knee,
Vera, Chuck & Dave.
Send me a postcard, drop me a line,
Stating point of view;
Indicate precisely what you mean to say.
Yours sincerely, wasting away;
Give me your answer, fill in a form,
Mine for evermore.
Will you still need me, will you still feed me,
When I'm sixty-four?

"WHEN I'M SIXTY-FOUR"
(John Lennon and Paul McCartney)
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c/o ATV Music Corp., 6255 Sunset Blvd., Suite 723,
Los Angeles, California 90028
*For the U.S.A., Canada, Mexico and The Philippines:
Northern Songs Limited for the rest of the world.
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HELLO IN THERE

by

John Prine

We had an apartment in the city, me and Loretta liked living there.
It'd been years since the kids had grown, a life of their own
and left us alone.
John and Linda live in Omaha, and Joe is somewhere on the road.
We lost Davy in the Korean war, and I still don't know what for,
don't matter anymore.

Ya know that old trees just grow stronger, and old rivers grow
wilder ev'ry day.
Old people just grow lonesome waiting for someone to say,
"Hello in there, hello."

Me and Loretta, we don't talk much more, she sits and stares thru
the back door screen.
And all the news just repeats itself like some forgotten dream
that we've both seen.
Someday I'll go and call up Rudy, we worked together at the
factory.
But what could I say if he asks, "What's new?" Nothing, what's
with you? Nothing much to do.

So if you're walking down the street sometime and spot some
hollow ancient eyes, please don't just pass'em
by and stare as if you didn't care, say,
"Hello in there, hello."

Lesson 6: Age-grading

Goal: To identify the pervasiveness of age-grading in our society and its effects on the lives of the elderly.

Objectives: -- To judge the appropriateness of various activities for different age categories.

-- To define the term age-grading and provide an example of age-grading.

-- To draw conclusions concerning the effects of age-grading on old people based on background information.

Background Information:

Age-grading (age-stratification) refers to the process of judging certain behaviors as appropriate or inappropriate for different age groups. Individuals of all ages encounter these culturally determined expectations. For example, most people would frown at a child of six smoking, while the same behavior is socially acceptable for an adult.

Stereotyped images of older people are prevalent in our society. These views shape the status and functions of older people. A societal set of expectations restricts the aged to a limited range of acceptable behavior. In effect, a double standard exists for older and younger Americans.

> In our society, "youth" is associated with physical and mental vigor, bizarre dress, speed and beauty; "old age," with decrement of physical and mental powers, unattractiveness, reflection, conservation and inflexibility. Younger persons are adjudged to be on the "wild side"--a bit reckless, boisterous, thoughtless, and irresponsible. Older persons, on the other hand, are "expected" to be reserved, quiet, dependable, and dignified, with little interest in play and the "lighter side" of things. It is "right" for youth to marry, but still mostly "out of bounds," "improper," or perhaps even immoral for oldsters. Such a negativistic outlook places "aging" in a damagingly wrong perspective.
> (Jacobs et al., 1970:36)

This activity has students examine their biases concerning appropriate behaviors for older people. Why are certain behaviors judged inappropriate? How do these expectations restrict the elderly to a limited range of acceptable behaviors and what affect does this restriction have on older people?

Materials and Equipment Needed:

- Student handout, "Age Prejudice in America"
- Blackboard or bulletin board

Procedures:

1. Put a time line, listing infancy, early childhood, school age, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and mature age on the blackboard. Make up a list of activities in which people engage. You can supply the list or have students brainstorm a list of activities. Ask students to place the activities on the time line. Which of them are appropriate to only one age? Which fit into many categories?*
(Due to overlap, you can choose to complete activity 1 and/or activity 2)

2. Make a list of activities and discuss whether students feel that these are appropriate to mature age.

playing tennis	attending a rock concert
reading a book	attending a classical concert
watching television	going backpacking
falling in love	sitting on the grass in the park
hugging and kissing	going out dancing
wearing make-up	changing hair color
swimming	wearing bright colors

What do you think?

1. Do you feel this activity is appropriate for older people? Why or why not?
2. Does it make you feel uncomfortable to see old people doing some things? Why?
3. "Would you approve of a woman who wears a two-piece bathing suit to the beach when she is 18? when she's 35? 55? What about a woman who decides to have another child at 40? at 35? at 30?"(from Huyck,1974)
4. What is meant by age-grading? Provide an example of age-grading. In what ways is it beneficial? Harmful?
5. Are we products of society's expectations? What happens when an individual ignores societal expectations? (role conflict)

3. Have students close their eyes and ponder with you for a minute. How do you spend your free time? What are your favorite activities? Now picture yourself at age 25. Would you be engaged in these same activities? How would they be similar? Different? What about at age 45? at 65? (Students are not to respond aloud but to merely reflect upon these questions).

What did you find out?

1. Did you picture yourself doing the same things you like to do now at older ages? Why or why not?
2. What factors might change the kinds of activities you engage in as you grow older?

4. Distribute copies of "Age Prejudice in America" and have students read the article.

What do you think?

1. How do social expectations affect the behaviors of older people?
2. Are our images of old people stereotyped? If so, what effect does this have on the lives of older Americans?

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* Activities 1 and 2 were developed by Adele Saxe at San Jose University and are contained in Views of Aging: A Teacher's Guide by Marcia J. Cameron (Institute of Gerontology, University of Mich., 1976). Reprinted with permission.

AGE PREJUDICE IN AMERICA

by
Alexander Comfort

Physical aging accounts for perhaps 25 percent of the picture of aging that we see in American society. Seventy-five percent is accounted for by another type of aging, sociogenic aging, which has no physical basis. It is the role which our folklore, prejudices, and misconceptions about age impose on "the old." It requires no scientific discoveries to abolish this aspect of aging; simply a change of attitute...

If we insist that there is a group of people who, on a fixed calendar basis, cease to be people and become unintelligent, asexual, unemployable, and crazy, the people so designated will be under pressure to be unintelligent, asexual, unemployable, and crazy; the fact that no person who is not sick becomes any one of those things by virtue of age alone is beside the point. The fact that many, if not most, older people obstinately fail to be as we describe them is beside the point. As they are well known to be unemployable, we don't let them work; as they are known to be asexual, and it is embarassing if they are not, we can herd them into institutions which deny them elementary privacy. As they are known to be liable to go crazy, symptoms due to infection or overmedication, or simple exasperation with a society which demeans the older citizen, are interpreted as senility. In fact, rather fewer old people are crazy than at earlier ages: about nine per thousand over 65 need psychiatric hospitalization, and that includes chronic brain disease, alcoholism, the lot. Old people become crazy for three reasons: because they were crazy when young, because they have an illness, or because we drive them crazy. Prejudice not only has a bad effect on its victims; in this case it corrupts us all. Other victims of vulgar prejudice suffer from it lifelong, but we all become old....We have a lifetime of indoctrination with the idea of the difference and inferiority of the old, and on reaching old age we may be prejudiced against ourselves.

...The right way to handle the old is to stop treating them as a problem when they are in fact a resource, and begin treating them as people - the same people they were, which they are.

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Lessons 7 and 8: Mass Media and the Elderly

Goal: To recognize mass media as reinforcers of age-stereotypes.

Objective: -- To analyze different media's portrayals of older people.

Background Information:

Approximately 75% of youth's leisure time is spent exposed to various forms of media(Jacobs, 1970:382). Upon high school graduation, the average individual has watched over 15,000 hours of television and spent 11,000 hours in school. Continued exposure to television's portrayal of older people inevitably influences one's concept of growing old. Such exposure is unavoidable and serves to reinforce societal age-stereotypes.

Studies of television's portrayal of older people found: old people, particularly women, tend to be underrepresented; older characters are generally portrayed in secondary roles; the authority and esteem of male characters increased with age, whereas, it deteriorated for female characters; few commercials depicted older people and they were generally shown in a humorous light or advertising products directed only to the elderly.

Humor acts as another reinforcer of stereotypes. Analyses of jokes revealed that over 50% of the jokes were negative in their treatment of the aged and negative jokes focused on old maids, mental ability, physical agility or appearance.

Television programs, newspapers, literature, advertisements, jokes and other forms of media reflect culturally determined age-graded role expectations. Media portray older people as passive and peripheral, providing negative associations with aging. Older characters suffer from neglect and superficial treatment -- a malady affecting the general older population.

This activity examines three different medium for their portrayal of old people. Advertisements, television and jokes are analyzed.

Materials and Equipment Needed:

- Newspapers and magazines (or use of these materials in the school library)
- Student handout, "Observer's Report Form"
- Student handouts, "Humor and Aging" and "Joke Analysis Form"
- Blackboard

Procedures:

1. Approximately a week prior to this activity, distribute copies of the "Observer's Report Form." Go over the form with students to assure that they know how to use it. Direct students to watch three or more television programs and commercials and to record their observations on the form. These completed forms should be brought to class tomorrow.

2. In this activity students will analyze advertisements found in newspapers and magazines. Students can be directed to bring these items or the library's resources can be utilized. Provide students with the following directions:*

   1. Take a sheet of lined paper and divide it into seven vertical columns. Make the first column about two inches wide, the next five columns about one-half inch wide, and leave a wide column on the right.
   2. At the head of the first column write "Product or Service." Head the five narrow columns with these abbreviations: "C" for child, "T" for teenager, "Y" for young adult, "M" for middle-aged, and "E" for elderly. At the top of the last column write "Stereotypes."
   3. Go through a magazine page by page and, for each advertisement in which people are featured, list in the first column the product or service advertised. In the next five columns place a checkmark for each group represented by the people featured in the advertisement. In the right hand column list terms that come to mind to describe any stereotypes of age groups that you observe.
   4. Study the results of your analysis, and on the back of your sheet(s) list any conclusions you can draw from this activity about the use of age stereotypes in advertising.

This completed activity is due the following day.

*This activity is from Teaching About Aging (Boulder, Colorado: Social Science Education Consortium, Inc., 1977) by Francis E. Pratt, pp.35-36.

The following class day:

1. Conduct a follow-up discussion on student findings from analyzing advertisements.

   What did you find out?

   1. Do you notice any patterns of stereotyping for the examined age groups?
   2. Which age groups appeared most frequently in the advertisements? least frequently?
   3. What general societal values are reflected in these advertisements?

2. Draw the chart found on the following page on the blackboard. (NOTE: the examples are for teacher use only - do not put them on the board). Ask students to take out their completed "Observer's Report Form" and provide examples of their findings for each age category. Record their findings on the blackboard.

   What did you find out?

   1. Do any general stereotypes emerge for the different age groups?
   2. Can you cite examples of TV characters who do not conform to the stereotypes? examples of family members, friends or acquaintances who do not fit the stereotypes?
   3. Are these stereotypes warranted?

3. Distribute copies of "Humor and Aging" and the "Joke Analysis Form." As a class, in groups or individually, analyze each joke for its portrayal of old people.

   What did you find out?

   1. Did any patterns emerge from your analysis? Did you encounter any stereotypes? If so, what were they?
   2. How did you decide if a joke was positive, negative or ambivalent? Did everyone use these same criteria? If not, how did the use of different criteria affect people's findings?
   3. Based on analyses of advertisements, television and humor, what conclusions can be drawn regarding media's portrayal of old people?

OBSERVER'S REPORT FORM

AGE	TV CHARACTER	SEX	OCCUPATION AND PASTIMES	ECONOMIC STATUS	PERSONALITY TRAITS
Children	Example: Elizabeth Dalton	female	student "tomboy"	lower income	loving, secure independent
Teens	Example: Vinnie Barbarino	male	student dating	lower-middle income	"cool"
Young Adult (20-40 years)	Example: Starsky	male	police officer dating	middle income	independent athletic fun-loving
Middle-Aged (40-65)	Example: Archie Bunker	male	loading dock worker men's clubs watching TV drinking	lower-middle income	prejudiced set in his ways outspoken
Old (65 and older)	Example: Fred Sanford	male	junk dealer watching TV talking to friends	lower income lower-middle?	finicky self-centered good sense of humor blunt

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OBSERVER'S REPORT FORM

AGE	TV CHARACTER	SEX	OCCUPATION AND PASTIMES	ECONOMIC STATUS	PERSONALITY TRAITS
Children					
Teens					
Young Adult (20-40 years)					
Middle-Aged (40-65)					
Old (65 and older)					

HUMOR AND AGING

1. It may be true life begins at 40 but everything else starts to wear out, fall out, or spread out.
(READERS DIGEST, 1972)

2. The old man really goes in for athletics - rides horseback every day, except for the last two weeks in August. That's when the guy who puts him on and off takes his vacation.
(Adams, 1968)

3. An elderly gentleman, wealthy and deaf, came into our shop to purchase a much improved hearing aid. Two weeks later, he returned to report that he could hear conversations quite easily, even in the next room.
"Your friends and relatives must be very happy that you can hear so much better," I said.
"Oh I haven't told them," he chuckled, "I've been sitting around listening and do you know what? I have changed my will three times!"
(Story by Kathryn Lyons. Reprinted with permission of READERS DIGEST)

4. She was 18 and her husband 30 when they met. Now he's 60 so she figures since he's twice as old as he was, then she must be 36.
(Safian, 1967)

5. Teacher: "Johnny, how old is a person who was born in 1902?"
Johnny: "Man or woman?"

6. A woman was asked if she carried a momento of someone in her locket. "Yes, it is a lock of my husband's hair," she replied. "But your husband is still here," she was told. "Yes, but his hair isn't."

7. A little girl going to bed was reminded by her mother to include Grandma in her prayers and to pray that God should let her live to be very, very old. "She's old enough," replied the little girl. "I'd rather pray that God would make her young."

8. An old man was walking up a steep hill, carrying a heavy load. Finally in complete weariness and disgust, he threw his burden down and cried, "I can't take it anymore. Let the Angel of Death come and take me!" At that, the Angel of Death appeared before him and said, "You called?" The old man quickly replied, "Yes. Will you help me get this load back on my shoulders?"

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9. After interviewing the gentleman on his 99th birthday, the reporter thanked him and added: "I hope I'll be around to talk to you on your 100th birthday, next year."
"Why not? You look healthy enough to me."
(MODERN MATURITY, 1978)

10. The ones who usually manage to get the most out of old age are the grandchildren.
(Reprinted with permission from THE SATURDAY EVENING POST © 1960, The Curtis Publishing Company)

11.

"Which age do you mean? My anatomic, psychologic, physiologic, mental, or chronologic?"

Reprint permission granted by Al Ross 1978.

12.

the small society
by Brickman
FOOD MART
TODAY'S SPECIAL
HOO-BOY!
SINCE MY HUSBAND RETIRED, I HAVE TWICE AS MUCH HUSBAND ON HALF AS MUCH MONEY -

(c) Washington Star Syndicate, Inc. Permission granted by King Features Syndicate, Inc. 1978.

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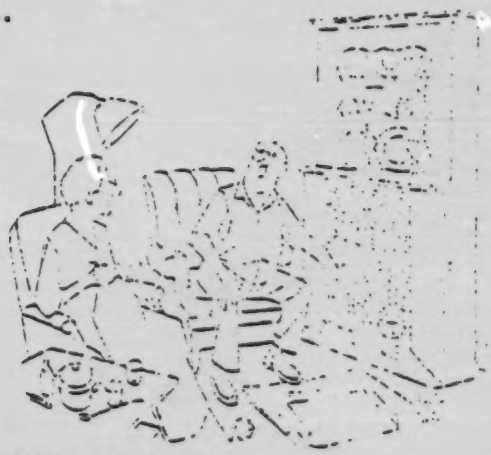
13.

"At your age, Mr. Twinple, there's always a lot of will and no 'way.' "

Reprint permission granted by Ted Trogdon 1978.

14.



"Well, shall we get on with our golden years?"

Drawing by Geo. Price (c) 1968 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc. Reprinted with permission 1978.

JOKE ANALYSIS FORM

Directions: Read each joke and analyze its treatment of old people. First, check the appropriate column to indicate the sex(es) of all the featured characters. Next, check the column which indicates if the joke tends to be positive, negative or mixed in its portrayal of older people. In the last column, briefly describe the theme of the joke. Did it deal with physical appearance, death, sex, hiding one's age, etc.?

Joke Number	Sex			Portrayal of Old People			Theme or Subject
	Male	Female	Nonspecified	Positive	Neg.	Ambivalent	
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							

Lesson 9: Older People: Their Problems and Needs

Goal: To develop awareness regarding the concerns of older people.

Objectives: -- To generate five hypotheses about the needs and problems of old people based on background information.

-- To test initial hypotheses by interpreting poll data.

Background Information:

Many of the problems confronting old people are not due to age alone but rather are determined by their life circumstances, e.g. poverty, race and educational attainment. And since these life circumstances vary greatly within the older population, so too do their problems and needs vary. Despite the diversity of the aged, the general population frequently ascribes a set of problems to all individuals over age sixty-five.

The Harris poll (1975) showed that the general public tended to view problems encountered by older people more seriously than did the elderly. Areas revealing wide discrepancies included: fear of crime, poor health, loneliness, and not feeling needed. In discussing problems and needs of the elderly several points should be kept in mind: old people do face many problems, but these problems are not the same for all old people and they vary according to life circumstances; old age is accompanied by a decline in the five senses (hearing, smell, taste, sight, and feeling) which can confound already existing problems or create new ones; physical, social and emotional problems are inextricably intertwined, with changes in one area often affecting needs in another (e.g. severe arthritis may decrease one's mobility, which may in turn increase one's fear of being vulnerable to attack while outside, resulting in self-imposed isolation and loneliness); physical, social and emotional problems experienced during youth often carry over into all periods of an individual's life; and "having a problem (should not) be confused with being a problem" (NCOA, 1975:4).

The previous activities provided students with background information on older people in the United States. This background information enables students to hypothesize on the needs of old people. Examining the needs and concerns of the older population helps create a more complete picture of who the elderly are in the United States.

Materials and Equipment Needed:

- Tables 1-5 from lesson 2 (optional)
- Student handouts, " 'Very Serious' Problems for Public 65 and Over"

Procedures:

1. Briefly have students review the background information they gained from tables 1-5 and prior discussions. Using this information as a springboard, direct students to make five hypotheses on the problems and needs of the aged. This activity can be conducted individually, in small groups or as a class.

   What do you think?

   1. Given the limited fixed income of many elderly, what problems might they encounter? (inability to absorb unexpected medical expenses; inflation forcing cutbacks in expense areas, e.g. food, clothing; nutritional problems due to insufficient funds; lack of mobility; etc.)
   2. What problems might living alone create for many older people? (loneliness; forced institutionalization due to inability to maintain household; increased vulnerability to crime)
   3. Do your hypotheses apply to all old people? What further information is needed to test these hypotheses?

2. Distribute copies of the student handouts, " 'Very Serious' Problems for Public 65 and Over." Inform students that the information in these three tables was compiled from a national poll conducted in 1975. In examining the data presented in these tables it is first necessary to ascertain that students are skilled in interpreting tables. How detailed or basic your questioning pattern will be depends on the skills of your students. The questions below serve as a guide.

   Table 1. What did you find out?

   1. What kind of information is presented in this table?
   2. Which income group views "fear of crime" most seriously? Hypothesize as to why this income group expresses the greatest fear of crime (e.g. low income individuals are likely to live in central city areas where crime rates are high). Which age group feared crime the most? Did you expect this result? Why or why not? Does one's age appear to be a key determinant in how much a person fears crime?
   3. Which income group expressed the greatest concern over "poor housing?" Why might one expect this income group to be most concerned about housing? Which age group viewed poor housing most seriously? (NOTE: Pursue this

line of questioning for the other problem areas.

4. After examining each of the five problem areas listed, do you notice any patterns? (e.g. the lowest income group perceived each of the five problems most seriously; the over age 65 group seemed less dissatisfied with their ability to make ends meet, to live in adequate housing and to feel needed than the other age groups; etc.).
5. What appears to be the key factor in determining the perceived seriousness of the problems listed? (income level) Explain how all five problems can be interrelated due to a person's income, e.g. How does not having enough money affect a person's health, living arrangements, social contacts, and their ability to install security measures?
6. What other factors might affect how seriously an individual perceives these problems? (race, sex, educational attainment)

Table 2. What did you find out?

1. What kind of information is presented in this table?
2. Which group of older people expressed greater concern over crime? health? loneliness? Housing?
3. Which problem was viewed most seriously by older whites? (fear of crime) By older blacks? (not having enough money to live on)
4. What patterns or generalizations can be made from this information? (e.g. older blacks face more serious problems than older whites)
5. Why might older blacks have more serious problems than older whites? What further information is needed to confirm your guesses?

Table 3. What did you find out?

1. What information is presented in this table?
2. Which educational group finds "poor housing" to be a serious problem? Which age group?
3. Which educational group expresses the greatest concern over an inadequate income? Which age group?
4. Which educational group views poor health most seriously? Which age group?
   (NOTE: Pursue this line of questioning to the degree you feel necessary).
5. What conclusions can be drawn from this information? (e.g. one's level of education appears to be a more important factor in determining the seriousness of these problems than one's age).

What do you think?

1. What factors appear to affect how seriously one perceives problems?
2. How important is an individual's age in determining the kinds of problems he is likely to face?
3. Can you think of any problems that are due mostly to age?
4. Do all old people experience the same problems?

Table 1 "VERY SERIOUS" PROBLEMS OF PUBLIC PERSONALLY (BY INCOME)

	Total Public			
	Total %	18-54 %	55-64 %	65 and Over %
Not having enough money to live on				
Under $7,000	35	44	41	20
$7,000-$14,999	15	17	11	5
$15,000 and over	8	8	6	1
Fear of crime				
Under $7,000	25	27	24	24
$7,000-$14,999	15	14	18	21
$15,000 and over	9	9	9	17
Poor health				
Under $7,000	24	18	35	26
$7,000-$14,999	8	7	15	9
$15,000 and over	7	6	11	11
Poor housing				
Under $7,000	12	16	13	5
$7,000-$14,999	5	6	2	1
$15,000 and over	3	4	2	-
Not feeling needed				
Under $7,000	10	10	13	9
$7,000-$14,999	4	4	3	4
$15,000 and over	4	4	6	2

Table 2 "VERY SERIOUS" PROBLEMS FOR PUBLIC 65 AND OVER PERSONALLY (BY RACE)

	Public 65 and Over	
	White	Black
	%	%
Fear of crime	21	41
Poor health	20	35
Not having enough money to live on	12	43
Loneliness	11	23
Not enough medical care	8	26
Not enough education	6	7
Not enough to do to keep busy	5	12
Not enough friends	4	8
Not enough job opportunities	4	15
Poor housing	2	18
Not enough clothing	2	11

Table 3 "VERY SERIOUS" PROBLEMS OF PUBLIC PERSONALLY (BY EDUCATION)

	Total Public			
	Total	18-54	55-64	65 and Over
	%	%	%	%
Not having enough money to live on				
Some high school or less	26	28	29	20
High school grad., some college	15	17	12	8
College graduate	8	9	10	3
Fear of crime				
Some high school or less	21	18	25	25
High school grad., some college	11	14	11	23
College graduate	9	8	15	10
Poor health				
Some high school or less	21	14	28	26
High school grad., some college	9	8	14	14
College graduate	4	3	17	9
Not enough education				
Some high school or less	14	17	11	12
High school grad., some college	4	5	2	2
College graduate	1	1	-	1
Loneliness				
Some high school or less	12	10	15	15
High school grad., some college	6	6	9	9
College graduate	4	4	4	6
Poor housing				
Some high school or less	9	13	7	5
High school grad., some college	6	6	5	2
College graduate	1	1	2	1
Not feeling needed				
Some high school or less	8	8	9	9
High school grad., some college	5	4	7	5
College graduate	1	2	-	2

Tables 1-3 reprinted with permission from THE MYTH AND REALITY OF AGING IN AMERICA, a study prepared by Louis Harris and Associates, Inc. for the National Council on the Aging, Inc., Washington, D.C. © 1975.

Lesson 10: Where to live? The Diverse Housing Needs of Older People

Goal: To recognize that due to different lifestyles, interests, physical conditions, and financial circumstances, older people need a diverse range of housing alternatives.

Objectives: -- To identify the living arrangements of older people by interpreting graphs.

-- To analyze the housing needs of older people given a list of various changes that affect this population.

-- To identify the diverse housing needs of older people by examining two case studies.

-- To suggest alternatives to institutionalization for older people based on background information.

Background Information:

The diversity of the older population is further reflected in their broad range of housing needs and preferences. Like all sectors of our population, the elderly live in a variety of housing arrangements. Contrary to popular belief, less than five per cent of the elderly reside in institutional settings. The majority of people over 65 live in family settings with most of these settings being two person households consisting of a husband and wife.

In describing the housing arrangements of older people, there are some characteristics that distinguish them from other sectors of the population. The Senate Special Committee on Aging (1976) reported that over 30% of the elderly live in substandard housing. One possible indicator of "substandard" is the age of a house. Over half of the owner-occupied households of older people were built in 1939 or earlier. The elderly spend one third of their income on housing in comparison to the 25% spent by younger families. Any rent or tax increases greatly affect older people living on fixed incomes.

Older people move less frequently than any other age group. This lack of mobility is due to several reasons: the trauma of leaving a familiar setting, loss of one's sense of security, proximity to friends and family, and the expense of moving. Yet studies reveal that with sufficient preparation time and a positive outlook, a move can enhance the life satisfaction and morale of older people.

The main housing alternatives available to older people are briefly described below.

Owner-occupied dwellings:
- 70% of the households headed by individuals 65 or older are owned

Renter-occupied dwellings:
- about 30% of the noninstitutionalized elderly live in rented properties

Institutional dwellings:
- institutions are both privately and publicly owned and represent a broad range of living arrangements
- most elderly residing in institutions are white, female and over age 75
- the four main types of institutional settings are:
  1. Homes for Adults (domiciliary care homes) - they provide a semi-independent sheltered living arrangement for ambulatory older adults. Health services are usually not provided.
  2. Personal Care Homes (intermediate care) - these homes "offer long-term nursing care for the chronically ill or disabled who do not require constant medical supervision"(Moss, 1975:62).
  3. Skilled Nursing Facilities - around the clock skilled nursing is provided for the residents of these facilities.
  4. Mental Institutions - it is estimated that perhaps half of the elderly residing in mental institutions do not have irreversible organic disorders, but there is no place else for them to go.

Special housing:
- retirement communities provide an intermediate living arrangement. Social, medical, recreational, and commercial services are often provided.

It is not sufficient to merely describe the living arrangements of older people. The adequacy of such housing must also be explored. This lesson introduces the student to both topics.

Materials and Equipment Needed:

- Student handout, "Where do the elderly live?"
- Student handout, "Housing Needs of Older People"
- Student handouts, "Aunt Becky" and "Goodbye, Green Knolls"

Procedures:

1. Distribute copies of the student handout, "Where do the elderly live?" Discuss the living arrangements of older people.

What did you find out? (Table 1)

1. What type of living arrangement is most prevalent for older people?
2. What accounts for more older women than older men living alone? (The women tend to outlive their husbands).
3. Which category has the highest rate of institutionalization? (females over 75)

What do you think?

1. Is the proportion of institutionalized older people larger, smaller or about what you expected?
2. What stereotype might this reflect?

What did you find out? (Table 2)

1. Do most elderly live in metropolitan or non-metropolitan areas?
2. In what part of the city do most elderly live?

What do you think?

1. Hypothesize on why many elderly live in central cities.
2. What problems are commonly found in central cities? How might this affect the older residents?

2. Explain that aging is accompanied by many changes, physiological, economic, and social changes. These changes create different needs and affect the types of housing that are most suitable for older people. Distribute copies of the student handout, "Housing Needs of Older People." As a class, in small groups, or individually, discuss some of the implications these changes hold for housing for the elderly.

What do you think?

1. What kinds of housing improvements might assist older people in coping with these changes? (e.g. brighter lighting and colors, lowered cabinets and fixtures, ramps, hand support fixtures, etc.)
2. Do all old people experience these changes at the same rate, if at all? What implications does this have for the housing needs of older people?

3. Distribute copies of "Goodbye, Green Knolls" and "Aunt Becky" (tell students that this is a true case study). Discuss how different interests, lifestyles, economic circumstances, and physical conditions affect the housing needs of older people.

What do you think? (Goodbye, Green Knolls)

1. "Why did this couple decide to leave Green Knolls?
2. As far as we know, others, including the Simpsons, were perfectly satisfied with Green Knolls. What do you think made the difference?" (From Preparation for Retirement)

What do you think? (Aunt Becky)

1. What problems did Aunt Becky face? How did she resolve these problems?
2. What would you have done in a similar situation?
3. How typical do you think these problems are for old people? (refer back to tables from the first part of the lesson)
4. Is it ever necessary to live in an institution? If so, when?
5. Why is entering an institution often seen as the least desirable housing alternative? (by both the elderly and people in general)

4. Inform students that 15-40% of the institutionalized elderly could move back into the community if supportive services were provided (Hendricks and Hendricks, 1977:285). Direct students to brainstorm a list of supportive services that might enable older people to remain independent who would otherwise be institutionalized (e.g. meals on wheels, transportation services, day care centers, friendly visitors, homemakers, home health aides, telephone reassurance, etc).

What do you think?

1. What are the advantages of assisting older people in retaining their independence? (economic, social, psychological)
2. Are any of these services available in your community? If you do not know, where can you locate this information?

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WHERE DO THE ELDERLY LIVE?

TABLE 1

Living Arrangements of Men and Women 65 and Over: 1975

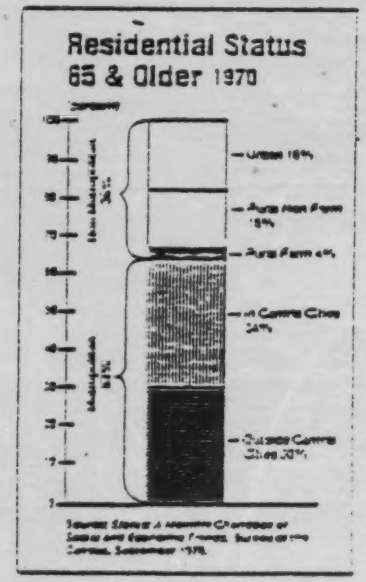
(By Percent)

MALE			FEMALE		
		65-74 YEARS			
Family	Alone	Institutionalized	Family	Alone	Institutionalized *
85	12.1	2.9	54.6	32.9	2.5
		OVER 75 YEARS			
74.3	18.2	7.4	49.4	40.6	10.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. Current Population Reports Special Studies, Series P-23, No. 59, May 1976, p.48.

* NOTE: Less than 5% of the population 65 and over is institutionalized at any one point in time.

TABLE 2



HOUSING NEEDS OF OLDER PEOPLE

Directions: The table below lists many changes commonly associated with aging. These changes affect the housing needs of older people. Examine the changes listed in column two and then describe housing features that might meet the needs created by these changes in column three.

Dimensions	Changes	Implications for Housing
Physiological Changes in People	• decreased mobility • physical limitations • less acute hearing • less tolerance of heat and cold • less acute sight • development of physical ailments	
Economic Changes to People	• less income with retirement • changing economic conditions • increased cost of utilities and services	
Physiological & Psychological	• with less acute hearing and decreased mobility one may have more fear	
Social Changes in and to People	• separation from former colleagues(occupation) • loss of friends through death • change in neighborhood • all-day presence of retired spouses within the home	

Source: "Adequate Housing for Older People - What Is It?" By Helen Wells and Joe Wysocki in Issues of Concern in Gerontology (Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, 1977).

GOODBYE, GREEN KNOLLS

He gripped the hatchet firmly and then brought it down at a perfect angle. Helen, sitting in a canvas chair watching him, smiled.

"You still haven't lost your knack, Mike."

He chuckled. "I've been looking forward to this for the past three months. I just didn't have the guts to tell you."

Helen laughed too. "And I didn't have the courage to tell you. Where are you going to put it?"

"Out front. Right in front of those . . . what do you call them?"

"Camellias?"

"Yep, those Florida flowers . . . "

They walked out front together. It was a neat little Florida cottage, a white house with a pretty garden and a trim little picket fence, part of a retirement village about six miles from the town, only a mile from the ocean. There were about forty little houses just like theirs, and Helen could remember clear as anything the day they had driven down here two years ago, on their trip to look Florida over.

"Say, how about that?" Mike had said, as they drove past the little white houses, "it looks like a village of some sort. All the houses are the same. What's the sign say?"

"Slow up, and I'll read it. Stop the car, Mike, I have to get my glasses on. There . . . It says: Green Knolls--for older folks who like to live like young ones."

Mike laughed. "Say, now, that's pretty good. Sounds like a description of us. Let's drive in and see what one of those houses looks like close up. You think they have basements?"

"None of these Florida houses have basements, dear."

"Well, who needs a basement? I'm retiring next year . . . if we had a basement all I'd do is fix leaks."

"Mike," she laughed, "you can't talk about buying the first house you see . . ."

"Why can't I?"

But she knew he was kidding. They had come down to Florida to sort of feel the place out. So many of their friends have raved about it, that they had long promised themselves a trip. Now with Mike one year away from retirement, it seemed the sensible thing to do. Move to Florida. Get away from Michigan's cold winters, the salt on the streets that rusted the cars, the crazy fast pace of northern city life. Get to a place where you could sit in the sun all day and go fishing. Mike loved fishing.

So they investigated Green Knolls. And they both liked it right away. It was a new village. Plenty of retired people from all over the country lived there. They spent one more day driving around

Florida looking at houses, but they decided Green Knolls was for them, and so they bought a small two-bedroom cottage there.

That was two years ago. They had just finished one year of Mike's retirement and they were going to plant something in the front lawn that was neither a bush or a bulb.

Helen looked at the camellias. "Well, I will miss those," she said.

"I like Michigan flowers better," Mike grunted. "This look like an OK spot to you?"

She nodded. It was a good spot. The trouble was there were things she would miss. She would miss the flowers, and the warm winters, and they had made some friends . . . but all in all the place just wasn't for them. It had taken them three months for each of them to admit this to the other. When they finally did, they both had a good laugh at their expense. Up home, as Mike said one night, the winters were hard; they chilled your bones, and the salt they threw on the ice rusted your cars, but home was where you were from, it was where your children and grandchildren were, your relatives, your friends. Your past. Home was where you could live next door to a young couple who had kids in diapers, or an adolescent boy worrying about his skin condition and whether or not he would make the high school basketball team. Home was where everyone wasn't the same age and didn't have the same things so much in common it could drive you crazy. Home was where life was and where you could be part of it, and not a spectator from a retirement village six miles away.

"Well, here goes," Mike said, and with the blunt end of the hatchet he knocked the FOR SALE sign firmly into the sandy Florida earth. "End of an era," he said firmly.

Helen laughed and hooked her arm into his. "You know, you're never too old to learn. I just wonder why we had to find out the hard way. The Simpsons like it here, and we don't. Why couldn't we have found out ahead of time?"

"Look," Mike replied, grinning, "I used to think all I wanted to do when I retired was sit in the sun all day and fish. How else was I going to know it would drive me crazy until I had to do it."

"Nope," he said, patting her hand, "the important thing is that we did find out."

He looked around at the neat white houses, the pretty green lawns, the white picket fences, and behind them, the people their age sitting out on lawn chairs. He looked around and shook his head slowly . . .

Helen smiled, watching him.

Preparation for Retirement, Woodrow W. Hunter (Institute of Gerontology, Univ. of Mich. 1976). Reprinted with permission.

AUNT BECKY

"Listen, Aunt Becky," Rita said seriously. "I want you to think about moving to another apartment. Your legs aren't getting any better—you have to stop climbing three flights of stairs."

Becky Brown stirred impatiently. "Where will I move?" she retorted with some anger. "Here I'm paying $65 a month for four rooms. Where will I get such a low-rent apartment? I can't afford to pay any more than that. Besides your Uncle Bob wouldn't be happy anywhere else. I know he'll give me a hard time if I say I want to move."

Rita sighed as she looked around the dingy, old apartment. Aunt Becky had done her best to make it cheerful. Prints and pictures rested, somewhat crookedly, against the dirty walls; magazines in gay colors were stacked untidily on the bookshelves. Although she had no children of her own, Aunt Becky had been a baby nurse. The house was cluttered with snapshots of "her babies"—at all stages of their development, from infancy to marriage. She had retained contact with many of the families for whom she had worked. It had been a happy job, helping the young mothers care for their newborn babies; teaching them the small practical things that made mothering more fun, less burdensome. Aunt Becky had taken no courses—but she had brought the folk lore and lessons of a lifetime of hard work. And she always had a joke or story to drive the lessons home. Her apartment bore a happy, lopsided grin—much like her own easy, hearty laughter.

But the window blinds were dusty . . . the windows streaked with dirt . . . the paint peeling . . . the faded old curtains beginning to tear. Aunt Becky's housekeeping was severely limited by her increasing and numerous physical infirmities.

Becky followed her niece's eyes around the room. "I know," she said, "it looks pretty rundown to you. But to Uncle Bob and me, it's home."

"But—Aunt Becky—."

Becky interrupted. "Okay, okay, my dear," she said, "I promise to think about it."

Uncle Bob had retired years ago. That is, he had been retired. They let him work until he was 80 years old. (How much longer, they had said to him, did he think they'd be able to keep him?) He was almost 90 now. A thin, wiry man—he had kept up his own morale by the simple expedient of refusing to alter his lifelong daily routine. He would leave the house each morning to go "downtown"—even though he had no job to go to. He spent his days in the public squares, the parks, sometimes a library or a movie. He would dawdle over an occasional beer—or a very long-lasting cup of coffee in the automat. Then, in the late afternoon he'd return home, just as if he'd been to his job.

This suited Becky—for it left her free to continue her own busy, active routines as housewife, club member, relative, and friend. Becky had her capable hand in lots of things. Many people enjoyed her warm, hearty company and counted on her kind help when it was needed. Of

course, now her activity was curtailed by her stubbornly painful feet. She was able to go out less and less. She used the telephone more and more. But she still commanded her own life—firmly, loudly, and with humor.

That same evening, however, Bob was late. Becky waited nervously for him . . . her anxiety increasing as afternoon grew into dusk and then evening. There was nowhere to telephone. Nothing to do to ease the nagging fear in her breast. She sat at the window, looking down into the street.

The young policeman who knocked at the door made Becky feel very old indeed. He had brought Bob home. Bob, who had wandered for hours, having taken the wrong subway and lost his way. He'd been mugged, rolled, robbed, and ridiculed—and he staggered into Becky's arms weeping and cursing. The young policeman suggested politely that she not let him out alone anymore. "You better watch him, ma'am," he told her, "he might get hurt worse next time."

She calmed Bob, fed him, bathed him, and put him to bed like one of her babies. But there was no sleep that night for Becky. She lay awake thinking long and hard. If Bob couldn't find his way home here—what would happen to him if they ever moved to a new house?

No, Becky decided, as the first fingers of dawn pushed her into the next day, we're not moving from this house. Steps or no steps. Feet or no feet. If I have to be dragged up on a pulley, we will not move.

In vain Rita argued. In vain, she pointed out that if they would move to a housing project with an older adult center, Becky and Bob would both find friends . . . new things to do . . . Bob wouldn't feel he had to go "downtown" each day.

"Apply now," Rita implored. "You may have to wait a year to be placed."

But Becky had made her decision and nothing would change it.

Even though Bob became increasingly disoriented.

Even though her own legs sometimes refused to move another step. (Sometimes, when no one was looking, Becky would sit her huge bulk on the landing and gently slide down a few steps at a time—holding on to the railing—just to avoid standing on her feet.)

She was very careful to take excellent care of herself, for she knew Bob's life depended on her ability to function.

* * *

When Rita was called to the hospital, she found that Aunt Becky had broken a hip. Bob was devastated, Cousins and nieces rallied around to help care for him while Aunt Becky stayed in the hospital for the necessary surgery. When she was ready to be discharged, she wouldn't hear of going to a rehabilitation center. She took the walker, and went home to be with Bob. Rita never did know how she got up those three terrible flights of stairs. Subsequently, however, when she was summoned by the doctor for follow-up visits at the hospital clinic, the hospital social service department sent an ambulance with two men who would carry her down, and then up again.

She was indomitable. Day after day she sat in her living room, leaning on the walker, issuing clear demanding orders to her various helpers. She joked, she laughed, and she dictated.

Only at night, she wept. Wept and worried--for she knew Bob had cancer, and that she herself wasn't well. What would become of them?

Finally, her doctor told her that if she wanted to live and care for Bob, she better undergo serious internal surgery. That was when she reopened the discussion with Rita.

"What are my alternatives?" she asked. "I'm beginning to feel that I can't manage our lives anymore. And I can't watch over Bob. He's been losing his way . . . he's been mugged three times."

Rita hesitated. Things had become quite difficult by now. Family members, themselves with home problems, were traveling from all over the city to help. The Department of Social Service provided a part-time domestic worker . . . but there were thousands of additional small chores for which she had no time. Time was running out. It no longer seemed reasonable to apply to housing . . . a year at this point, seemed too long to wait.

Yet, it's pretty tough to tell your favorite aunt, who had helped you with your own four babies . . . and shared your joys in their growing up . . . to apply to an institution.

Becky spared her. With a deep sigh, she asked, "How long do you think I'll have to wait if I apply to the home for the aged?"

Rita helped her with the forms, the telephone calls, the home visits from the caseworker. The process lasted several months. Finally, Mr. and Mrs. Brown received formal notice to report for an interview with Mr. Johnson, an admitting social worker, and for their physical and psychiatric examinations.

The Home for the Aged was a solid old building. It stood on a hilltop overlooking what had once been a pocket of quiet in the growing city, but was now the center of a noisy, crowded, very poor ghetto community. On this gloomy day, the building looked like a monolithic gray mass against the clouded sky. The indoor hallways were in tones of gray--unrelieved today, by a single ray of sunshine. The building was quiet. A few old people shuffled softly about in the lobby. White-coated staff members walked about briskly, laughing and chatting with each other, often in brittle rapid Spanish.

Rita, Becky and Bob were greeted by Mr. Johnson and ushered into his tiny office. The interview went pleasantly. Mr. Johnson was gentle with Uncle Bob, who, unthreatened, responded rather appropriately. When they went upstairs for the physical and psychiatric exams, Rita waited anxiously for them in the lounge. When Mr. Johnson returned to summon her, she knew by his look that they had hit a snag.

Back in the tiny office, the social worker turned to Aunt Becky. "Mrs. Brown," he said, "the doctors have certified you for immediate admission. We could have you here in residence within two weeks."

"And my husband?" Becky asked. "We are applying as a couple you know. We don't want to be separated. Can he be admitted just as soon?"

The social worker shook his head. "I'm sorry," he said. "The doctors will not admit him at all."

"But why?" she asked.

"He's too disoriented. Our facility is not equipped to cope with him," was his reply.

"But I'll take care of him," she implored. "I'll watch over him. I won't let him get in anybody's way."

"We can't permit that. You see, you are here to be taken care of yourself."

There was no recourse. The doctors had decided. Of course, Mr. Brown could be referred to a private nursing home . . . they would be glad to make a referral. . . .

Aunt Becky stood up in the middle of his speech. Leaning on her walker with one hand, gripping Uncle Bob's coat sleeve with the other, she said, "I'm sorry we took up your time, Mr. Johnson. Thank you, but no thanks."

Rita drove them both home and somehow managed to help them upstairs. Aunt Becky never said another word about the application, about moving, or about any other kind of change. She went back to her seat in the living room, back to the routine of giving orders to anyone who could be pressed into service. Only she smiled less. And laughed not at all. And the sunny beam had left her kindly face.

About six months later, Uncle Bob died after a short illness at home. When her mourning period was over, Aunt Becky picked up the telephone and called Mr. Johnson.

"My husband is dead now," she told him. Her voice was firm, unclouded by tears. "I can dispose of my household in about three weeks. How soon can you admit me to your institution?"

Aging: An Album of People Growing Old, Shura Saul, Copyright 1974 John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Lesson 11: To Work or Not to Work: It's Impact on Older People

Goal: To examine the role of work in our society and assess its impact on the older population.

Objectives: -- To describe how work roles have changed over the past century based on background information.

-- To identify the different needs which employment fulfills and other possible means of meeting these needs.

-- To identify and evaluate the pros and cons of mandatory retirement by examining both arguments.

-- To identify problems encountered during retirement by reading several case studies.

Background Information:

An important issue facing older people is retirement. Our society's emphasis on the Protestant work ethic places a high value on work. An individual's worth is often assessed by examining the type of work he does and his income level. Work provides social status and role descriptions. When someone asks who we are, we tend to respond, "I am a teacher," etc. Working lends a certain degree of stability and regularity to our lives, it keeps us in the mainstream of activity. Thus, the cessation of work (retirement) is often a period of difficult adjustment for many old people.

Retirement is not always selected by choice. The Harris poll (1975) found that 2 of 5 retired individuals did not want to retire. Up until 1978, mandatory retirement at age 65 was commonly practiced by companies. The mandatory retirement age was changed to 70 for employees in the private sector (public employees, e.g. teachers, still face mandatory retirement at age 65). Yet, changing the age to 70 does not remove the problem inherent in mandatory retirement. Any arbitrary age cut off fails to acknowledge the diversity of the older population.

Older people encounter many stereotypes in the world of work. It takes older workers twice as long to locate new employment compared to individuals 10-20 years younger than them. They are often considered slow, difficult to train and subject to accidents. Yet, data reveal that in reality (Harris, 1978:90):

- As a group, older workers have fewer accidents and less absenteeism than other workers.
- The efficiency and productivity of older workers equal and sometimes exceed the output of younger workers in a wide variety of job situations.
- Older workers can acquire new job skills and be retrained to meet the demands of most work situations as readily as those who are younger, provided appropriate training is employed.

An extended period of retirement is a relatively new phenomena. People retiring today can anticipate spending an average of 20-25 years in retirement, a longer period of time than infancy, childhood and adolescence combined. In earlier times, farming was the chief occupation and people worked until they died or could no longer function effectively. (NOTE: The average life span was shorter). Industrialization, urbanization and a growing elderly population have all contributed to decreasing employment among people over age sixty-five.

How one adjusts to retirement is dependent upon several factors, including life-long patterns of adaptation, interests, income and health. Just as aging patterns vary, so too, do attitudes toward retirement. Some individuals look forward to their retirement years, while others dread the prospect. Although retirement is highly individual, certain common problems face many retiring people. These include concern over income, health and staying active.

Income decreases by half for most individuals upon retirement. Relied on pension plans cover only a small portion of the retiring work force. Only 5% of older people's income comes from pension benefits with over one third of their income being Social Security benefits.

The two previous lessons examined various problems encountered by older people. This activity looks at the role of work in our society and how denial of this role can create conflicts for the elderly.

Material and Equipment Needed:

- Student handouts,"The Case for and Against Mandatory Retirement"
- Student handouts, " A Cowboy Suit for Tad," "To Be Proud, To Be Old," "Time: Friend or Foe," "It's Not Easy To Sleep Late"
- Blackboard

Procedures:

1. Write the following statistics on the blackboard: "In 1900, two of three males 65 plus were employed; in 1950, less than one in two; and in 1975, one in five. In 1990, one in six is projected"(Harris, 1978:71). Use this information as a springboard in discussing why fewer old people are working - how have work roles changed over the last 100 years?

   What do you think?

   1. What kind of employment were most people (young and old) involved in before 1900? How has this changed since 1900?
   2. What reasons might explain the decreasing number of employed older people? Do you think this decreasing rate of employment is by choice?

2. Discuss how work becomes an important role in the lives of most people. Have students brainstorm a list of different needs which a job fulfills, e.g. a place to go, friends, income, feeling of importance. These can be listed on the blackboard. Next to this list have students suggest ways these needs might be met outside of a job, after retirement, e.g. part-time work, volunteer activities, social clubs, new hobbies, church activities, etc.*

   What do you think?

   1. What percentage of a week's time does the average person spend at work? (at the rate of 40 hours a week, about 25%)
   2. Why is it often difficult to adjust to not working? What is lost when a person stops working?

3. Explain that many people do not have the option of choosing to work or not work because of mandatory retirement policies. Handout copies of "The Case For and Against Mandatory Retirement." Instruct students to read the handouts and look for the pros and cons of mandatory retirement. When students finish reading, have them identify arguments for and against mandatory retirement. List these on the blackboard under "Pros" and "Cons." (Or students can be divided into two groups - one to present the case for mandatory retirement and the other group to present the case against).

   What do you think?

   1. Do you see any fallacies or weaknesses in any of these arguments?
   2. Which side, pro or con, seems to present the stronger case?

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* Adapted from Class Activity # 1, pages 26-27, Views of Aging. Reprinted with permission of the Institute of Gerontology, The University of Michigan 1978.

3. What do you think should be the basis for retiring people?
4. What alternatives are there to mandatory retirement?

4. Tell students that retirement often confounds problems that already exist and sometimes creates new problems. Divide students into four groups. Distribute copies of one of the following case studies to each group: "To Be Proud, To Be Old," "A Cowboy Suit for Tad," "Time: Friend or Foe," and "It's Not Easy To Sleep Late." Have students read and discuss the cases in their groups. As a class, discuss problems encountered during retirement. **

What do you think?

1. What problem(s) did these people encounter? How did they resolve the problem(s)?
2. How would you have solved the problems?

** All four case studies are reprinted from Preparation for Retirement, Woodrow W. Hunter (Institute of Gerontology, The University of Michigan, Rev. Ed. 1976). Reprinted with permission of the Institute of Gerontology, The University of Michigan 1978.

THE CASE FOR MANDATORY RETIREMENT

Youth Still Waits Its Turn

By SCOTT M. OLIN

PHILADELPHIA — The interview was not going well. I looked up on the wall and saw diplomas from central High School, Temple University and University of Pennsylvania. No, they were not going to offer a job to a short, curly haired white suburban kid with two out of state undergrads on his resume.

I had already been processed by two attorneys in the firm and was now seeing the Partner — the oldest lawyer in the office and the only name on the letterhead who was still alive. He asked in a raspy voice what I could offer the firm. I went through my standard spiel listing academic excellence, work background and youthful zeal. His eyebrows lifted at the sound of the word "youth" and vaguely denounced the bias that ups has a monopoly on talent, energy and creativity.

"Please see one difference between my youth and yours," he barked.

I leaned forward and spoke slowly. "There is a difference." I said. "You have old, shell broken energy or worth. There never has been a greater than that. It's out from that face."

Our turn. I have mulled that phrase over in my mind during the 14 months I have been looking for a job as an associate with a Philadelphia law firm. The whole experience has left me with a growing anger and resentment toward anybody 30 years old or older.

"Most of all, I resent the denial of the full use of my talents and the perpetuation of the American dream for a generation that has reaped the benefits for so long. Where is my ticket into the system?"

I am jealous of the 30 years of unbridled prosperity they took for granted, of suburbs constructed on plentiful wood and bricks and unbridled farmland, cheap cars and gas. I bristle at warming a house of 10 I create a gallon.

I am livid at the virtual unlimited opportunity they enjoyed — for job entry and advancement, to buy a home for $20 down, and to live in a world marked by building booms, baby booms, expanding civil rights and social programs.

But most of all, I resent the denial of the full use of my talents and the perpetuation of the American Dream for a generation that has reaped the benefits for so long.

Where is my ticket into the system? What government program, civic agency or unemployment bureau is there for young lawyers?

I am an honor graduate from law school and college, a New York State Regents Scholar, Phi Beta Kappa, and the recipient of three legal awards. It is ironic that I have never been able to land a job where I did not use a friend or political influence, that I was closer to being able to afford a car at age 18 than at 25, and that I live with the knowledge that I may never be able to afford my own home.

When I look around for help, I come up empty. On there are programs, but not for me. You can ride free on the subway to work — but only if you are over 65. You can be granted paupelly tax relief — if you are over 65. We will help you find a job — but not if you are 25. Afraid of losing your job? We will push the retirement age to 70.

I can't conceive of how many thousands of young people will have to wait five years more for their job to become open and how many millions of young people will be closed out of work because they had the misfortune to be born in 1953.

Bitter, angry, envious, jealous — yes, and more! But am I to be blamed? In a society that respects job salary and advancement, material possessions, a home in the suburbs and two cars, I have none.

Sandbagged into a dead end job, working as a clerk for the federal government, going for months without even getting an interview for a job I was trained to do, I must be considered a failure. Yet, I can't be. I haven't even had a chance to compete. I can't even get my foot in the door.

I am still waiting my turn.

(c) N.Y. Times Special Features. Scott M. Olin, graduated from law school in 1977, is a hearings analyst for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's bureau of hearings and appeals in Camden, N.J.

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THE CASE AGAINST MANDATORY RETIREMENT

by
Paul Woodring

The case against mandatory retirement on the basis of age rests upon the facts of differential aging, the differing effects of aging on various vocational skills, the waste of talent when men and women who still can do their work are forced to disengage from the work they do best, and the issue of human rights.

Although there is a considerable body of scientific data on the subject, one does not need such evidence to know that people do not suddenly become "aged" at sixty-five. They age gradually over a lifetime, some more rapidly than others. It is a common observation that some individuals are "older," both physically and mentally, at sixty than others at seventy or eighty. There is also a growing body of evidence that those engaged in intellectual work age less rapidly than those whose activities are less stimulating. Consequently, those who engage in intellectual pursuits are able to carry on their work far beyond the age appropriate for the retirement of those engaged in physical labor. Retirement rules based on the Social Security age make no allowances for these differences.

.... There is a growing body of evidence that the assumption that intelligence declines sharply with age is largely false, based on a fallacious comparison of test scores of older people with limited schooling with a younger generation with much more schooling. As a better-educated group moves into the older-age bracket, the differences will decline. (Dr. K. Warner) Schaie says, "If we had to select a chronologically meaningful retirement age (today) it would have to be at least a decade later than would have made sense twenty years ago."

There is also evidence that forced retirement accelerates the aging process. The American Medical Association's Committee on Aging reports that there is ample clinical evidence that physical and emotional problems can be brought on or made worse by denial of employment opportunities. It charges that setting a chronological age for retirement inflicts enforced idleness, which it characterizes as a "disease or disability-producing condition that is no less devasting than cancer, tuberculosis, or heart disease."

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Mandatory retirement results in an enormous waste of human talent. A 1974 Harris Poll revealed that nearly 40% of the 20 million Americans now retired would prefer to be actively engaged in work that would allow them to contribute to the mainstream of American society. Thus some 8 million individuals who could continue to be productive members of society are forced by present retirement rules to be nonproductive. As the number of older people grows while the working-age population declines because of the present low birthrate, the demand for increases in Social Security and other pensions will place a heavy burden on younger workers.

Finally, forced retirement, when based on a criterion that ignores the individual's ability to do the required work, is an arbitrary denial of human rights without due process, which appears to be in violation of the equal-protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Local courts in several states have so ruled, and soon the issue will come before the U.S. Supreme Court. If the courts fail to act, the legislative bodies may do so.

Forced retirement and hesitation in hiring older workers are frequently the result of stereotyping. Older workers are often considered slow, difficult to train and subject to accidents. Yet, data reveal that in reality(Harris, 1978:90):

- Older workers have fewer accidents and less absenteeism than other workers.
- The efficiency and productivity of older workers equal and sometimes exceed the output of younger workers in a wide variety of job situations.
- Older workers can acquire new job skills and be retrained to meet the demands of most work situations as readily as those who are younger, provided appropriate training is employed.

A COWBOY SUIT FOR TAD

Henry Benz looked up as his wife came in the door loaded with packages.

"Well, did they chase you out of the stores finally?"

Alice Benz laughed. She was a pretty woman, ten years younger than her husband. "No, Henry, there were plenty of people there when I left. Come here a minute. I want you to see the darling thing I bought little Tad."

"Can't I see it from here?"

"Henry, you're the laziest man I ever met."

Henry Benz laughed. "That's what retirement's done for me. Home four months now and I can't get out of a chair. Like I'm always telling the boys: the pay is no good but the hours are just fine. Good Heavens, what is it?"

"A cowboy suit, with real buckskin."

"You bought him a cowboy suit last year."

"Well, children don't stand still, Henry. They do something called growing. Feel the material."

"I'm feeling the price tag. Eight bucks!"

"If you shopped you'd know you couldn't get a good cowboy suit for less."

"I don't want to get a cowboy suit for less," Henry Benz said, trying not to sound the way he felt, trying to sound reasonable, "I don't want a cowboy suit at all. Alice, I walked downtown to have lunch with Tom and Dave so I could save us a quarter. You can't go out and, poof, just like that, buy a cowboy suit for eight dollars."

"Not for Tad?"

"Not for Gene Autry or Tom Mix! Alice, our income's been cut in half . . . now stop that, Alice, stop crying . . ."

"Henry, I can't not buy him things. Feel the material. The quality. Look at how it's made. Feel it, Henry . . ."

So he felt the material and it was good material because his wife always bought the best things and hadn't he always said that cheap stuff usually turned out to be expensive stuff in the end, and Tad was their only grandson. So he soothed his wife and wiped away her tears and she showed him some of the other things she bought for a visit to their children up north.

"A pipe for Bill. I can't stand his old pipe. And this scarf for Mary. Isn't it lovely? Look how well it will go with her hair. And look at the designs on it, Henry . . ."

He looked at the designs. They were little music signs and as Alice talked on about the crowded stores he thought how you could pencil two vertical lines through the music signs and they would turn into dollar signs.

Music signs he didn't know anything about, but he knew about dollar signs. He'd been working for dollar signs all his life . . .

since he was seventeen and held his first full time job. He had always worked for a living. Dollar signs bought bread for your family and kept a roof over your head. Dollar signs accumulated with overtime and doubletime, by getting to work promptly and doing your job well . . . dollar signs had put your son Bill through college and let the boy get a good job with an insurance company . . .

As long as he had his health and two good arms, he had never been afraid of not making money. He had always been a good provider. Now, he still had his health, but he had accumulated something else beside dollar signs: he had accumulated years . . . sixty-five of them. Last January 1st, he had retired and their income was cut in half.

Yet, for the past three months they had gone on living the way they had before. When was it going to catch up with them?

"I know what you're thinking, Henry," Alice said, watching him.

"What's that?" he asked, smiling.

"You're thinking I bought things for everyone except you."

"That's right," he forced a laugh.

"Well, I didn't forget you, Henry. Look . . ." She held out a pair of leather slippers, hand stitched, he saw. "After going to work all your life, I want you to feel comfortable around the house."

"Thank you, Alice," he said and kissed her, and took the slippers. It was true that he needed a new pair of slippers. It was probably true too that Tad needed a cowboy suit and Alice needed to buy things for people she loved. Just because you retired and your income was less than half of what it had been didn't mean you could change a lifetime of habits overnight--but what were you going to do? Let yourself go under? Some place along the line they had to stop and figure things out. Both of them, and soon!

Preparation for Retirement, Woodrow W. Hunter (Institute of Gerontology, University of Mich. 1976). Reprinted with permission.

TO BE PROUD, TO BE OLD

She was at the window because she wanted to see him coming. She wanted to see him before he saw her.

In a few moments he came around Hammond's Grocery, and the way he walked, his eyes on the ground, his shoulders slumped underneath his work shirt, she knew they had turned him down.

She closed her eyes and sat down. God give me strength. Please help me, she prayed.

When he opened the door, she had a smile on her face.

"Hello, Bert, I'll have dinner for you in just a few minutes."

"I'm not hungry," he grunted, and walked by her and went into the bedroom and slammed the door.

"Bert, please," she said, "can't we talk about it?"

"There's nothing to talk about," he said curtly, "they turned me down. They don't need an old man in their shop. They don't need an old man in the gas station, they don't need an old man anywhere."

She opened the door quietly. He was standing there, facing the wall, his hands clenched into fists.

"There's no place for men over sixty in this world, Mary. Look at my muscles, look at me . . . do I look like I'm going to die tomorrow . . . but they're not hiring men my age, as if we were some sort of disease. I begged the guy at the gas station. I used to grease cars. Give me a break. I can put in a good four or five hours work a day for you . . . 'Nothin' doing, Grampa,' he says, 'you might slip on the grease and break a leg.'

"Me . . . slip on the grease? Damn it, what are they trying to do to you? Put you in the grave before your time? I'm not ready to die! I'm not ready to kick . . ."

"Bert, please . . . the neighbors . . . calm yourself, Bert, the world's not coming to an end. Oh, I begged you not to go out looking for work . . . Bert, come, let's eat dinner."

"I'm not hungry," he said in a whisper, and sat down on the bed and buried his face in his hands.

This was the part she couldn't take. She closed the door and stood outside, hoping against hope he wouldn't, the way it had happened before. But in a moment she heard him. Bert Pavlik, sixty-four years old, crying like a baby . . .

She walked into the kitchen and sat down at the table. Now what was she going to do? Who could she turn to for help?

She went to the telephone and called the same person she had called last time. Their family doctor . . . he was the only one she could think of.

"Dr. Curtis," she said, trying not to cry herself, trying to keep calm, "this is Mary Pavlik, Bert's wife. You've got to come over and help us, Doctor. Bert went looking for work again today. I tried to

stop him. But he's a proud man. And they turned him down again, and it's just like it was last May, only it can't go on for two months again this time because I can't take it. I just can't take it again, Doctor."

The doctor spoke calmingly to her and told her he'd call a prescription for a tranquilizer into the drug store. And when he was done, she thanked him and hung up.

She sat there looking at the food. She wasn't hungry. She'd lost her appetite. She got up and went to the bedroom. It was deathly quiet in there. For a moment, panic swept her. She opened the door quickly. He was still sitting there, his head in his hands.

"Bert, please come eat," she said softly. "Bert, we can't go on like this. I love you, I need you, I want you . . ."

He looked up at her blankly, as if she were a stranger.

"What? What did you say?"

"Oh, Bert . . ." She burst into tears and ran to him and cradled his head against her body. "Bert, Bert, Bert . . . these were supposed to be the good years. The golden years. Bert, we mustn't lose these years . . . we mustn't . . ."

She cried like a child too; sometimes it was so good to cry.

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TIME: FRIEND OR FOE

Once there was a reporter, a young man, who was assigned to get answers to the question: what's time?

This is what he found.

For a kid in summer, time is walking along with a fishing pole over your shoulder, time is a long railroad track that goes on and on. And it's all ahead of you.

For a man in his thirties with an alarm clock waking him up at six and the cries of his kids greeting him at five, time's a pressure cooker in which he's trying to keep his head above water: paying bills, getting to work on time, painting the house, sanding away rust spots on the car, worrying about the high cost of living, getting in overtime, meeting payments . . . and setting the alarm for the next morning.

For the man in his sixties . . . just retired: time can be something else.

"You can't become a kid again," said one retired man to the reporter. "Someone said retirement's like being reborn again. Well, it isn't. You know too much. You've been too much. You've been useful all your life and suddenly you're useless. All your life you've been wearing a harness, and then zingo, one morning the harness is off. And you got time on your hands."

What could you do with time on your hands? Could you become a kid again and go fishing all day and every day? Could you fill up time with television programs? Could you do, would you want to do, what one man found himself doing?

"I was driving my wife crazy hanging around the house watching TV. I was driving myself crazy. 'Get out of the house,' she said to me. So I got out. I didn't know where to go. I began walking. I walked up one street and down another. It was crazy. It was no good."

Time is a friend or a foe. If you have to think about it, time can turn into an enemy.

"I figured that 'time,' after I retired, would be like a great big box which I had to fill up each day. So I began to make plans the day after I retired. In the morning I'd fill my box with sleeping late, then breakfast, then the morning paper, then a walk, then watch some TV, then lunch, then a nap, then maybe go down to the park and watch the kids play softball, then come home with the afternoon paper, read it, then supper, then do the dishes with the wife, then some TV and then to bed."

"So every day," said the retired machinist, "I filled my box with that routine, but the trouble was that the box wouldn't fill . . . and I got tired of what I was filling it with, so I gave up and just sat on the old rocker and watched the world go by."

Yet, the reporter found out, there were retired workers for whom time was no problem, something they didn't think about at all.

"Mr," said one man, "I was a welder in the parts department of an automobile factory. Now I'm welding for myself and my neighbors. I make weather vanes, bird houses, rails for steps . . . I'm repairing things all over the neighborhood. You know, I had to knock out the side of my garage and make it twice as big for my workshop. I'm in there at eight in the morning and out at eight at night. I'm teaching some neighborhood kids about welding too. Time . . . there isn't time enough."

Then there was the big heavy-set man who had been a shop steward in an airplane factory for thirteen years.

"I got no retirement problem because I'm not retired. The day I quit work I went down the block and spoke to this landlord and said: 'Look, your building is falling apart slowly because it doesn't pay you to hire someone to keep it up. Well, it'll pay you to hire me to spend two hours a day looking after it. Minor repairs. Little things.'

"I made that proposition to six landlords and three of them took me up on it. A good idea . . . save money for them and make a little for me, and keep me busy . . . six hours a day. My own boss . . . my own pace. The way I see it, Mister, retirement is something you either lick or it licks you. You got to get started on it right away. Maybe even before right away. Maybe ten years before. Maybe when you're fifty and it seems like it will never happen. The trouble with most guys is that they take one thing at a time. They won't think ahead . . . they can't see it coming till it's in their lap."

The reporter met one man who had thought ahead. He had been a lathe operator in a small factory in Chicago. This man had lived in Chicago all his life. Born in the city, married in the city, worked in the city. But his wife was from the country and she kept talking about going back.

"It was to be an experiment," said the man. "You don't turn into a farmer when you've been a city man all your life. But this land was cheap; it was out past the suburbs. We bought an acre at a time, starting when I was fifty—and now we got fourteen acres, and a small two-bedroom house. I grow roses, orchids, Shasta daisies . . . whatever I want to grow. Sometimes I sell the flowers, sometimes I don't. The money helps, but we've got my pension and our Social Security. If someone had told me that I would be bringing up daisies while I was still alive and kicking, I would have told them they were nuts. No, I don't think of it as a hobby . . . I just think of it as my new life. No, I don't think about time . . . except when my wife calls me and says its time to eat."

Time was a lot of things, thought the reporter, who was young, and had years to go before he retired. Time was feeling useless or useful, unwanted or wanted, undignified or dignified. Time was a long railroad track, a pressure cooker, a rocking chair, a TV set, a welding shop, older houses that needed older hands, an acre of roses that sometimes you sold and sometimes you didn't, but from which you always derived profit.

Time, concluded the reporter, was the man himself, and what he was willing to make of himself in the years ahead.

Time was planning ahead.

Time was Friend or Foe.

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IT'S NOT EASY TO SLEEP LATE

It was a very simple alarm clock. New, it had cost three dollars. Today Fred supposed you couldn't buy it for ten. The fact was that for thirty-seven years it had missed only once or twice. Monday through Friday, often on Saturdays, each morning it had gone off with a familiar old-fashioned clang-clang at 6:30 A.M. . . .

. . . and today, it had not sounded.

For a very good reason: he hadn't set it.

And yet, here he was at 6:30 A.M., wide awake, and staring at the silent clock. The birds were making noise outside, gray light was coming in their bedroom. By his side Millie was sleeping, stirring restlessly from time to time.

The first Monday in thirty-seven years that the clock hadn't gone off. And it was not beginning the way they'd pictured it. He and Millie had talked a lot about this first morning, the morning the old clock wouldn't sound. They would sleep till . . .

"Eight," said Millie.

"Not on your life. Nine."

"Let's compromise on ten."

And they had laughed about that first Monday of Fred's retirement. What would they do that first day?

Millie said they ought to go for a drive.

He thought maybe they ought to eat a big late breakfast and drop into a movie.

Millie voted for shopping on Main Street in the middle of a weekday. That would be a treat for him, Millie felt.

"How many things there'll be for us to do, Fred. Now that you're home all the time."

But all along, beneath the laughter and the plans, he knew there was something wrong—it might not work out that way. It was like when you were a kid and staring into a beautiful store window and thinking that all the stuff could be yours one day, and knowing in your heart it was a pipe dream.

And so this morning had come and the alarm hadn't gone off, and here he was wide awake, just as if he were ready to go to work. He was ready too. He could work. They had no business retiring him.

He closed his eyes. There was no sense in going over that again.

Outside he heard Ned's old car go up the street. Ned worked as a lathe operator in another town. He heard his neighbor Tony Spina come out his side door, go into his garage, start the car, and then leave it to warm up. Tony was five years from retirement. He and Tony had worked together in a welding shop. Wally Morgan was closing his windows across the street. Wally was part of a car pool going to the plant. Milk bottles rattling, babies crying, cars beginning to move up the street taking men to work, another day starting, the old

world getting a move on . . . and here he was lying there, trying to sleep, trying to enjoy his retirement.

I've got to sleep, he thought. I've got to sleep.

"Fred," Millie said quietly, "are you all right?"

Startled, he looked at her. She was looking at him with concern.

"Did you . . . did you wake up too?"

"Yes."

"That's silly. First morning in thirty-seven years you don't have to cook a breakfast at 6:30, and you wake up."

"You woke up too," Millie said.

"Well, with me—it's different."

"No," she said softly, "it's the same for us both. After thirty-seven years, Fred, you can't change overnight. It isn't easy to sleep late."

He nodded.

"I have a feeling, Fred, a lot of things aren't going to be easy. It's not going to be easy to sit around the house and talk, or visit the children, or go to a movie during the day. In thirty-seven years you build a rhythm, and then, one day, you stop it."

Fred looked at her. Her cheeks were a little swollen from sleep. But her eyes were clear--troubled, yes, but clear. She had waked too, and she was listening to the sounds too, maybe to other sounds, the sounds of women getting their men off to work. He hadn't thought of it till just now, but as long as he had been working at the plant—thirty-seven years, that long had he and Millie been married. A wife and a job. One stopped, but the other one didn't. The other one was still here, and that was the important thing. You weren't alone in this retirement fix, you had a woman you could count on, and who was counting on you.

No, Fred thought, looking at the ceiling, listening to Tony Spina get in his car and crunch down the driveway to the street, there were no easy answers, no short-cut solutions, but there were two people who would face it squarely.

"You don't have to just stop a rhythm," he heard himself saying, "you can change it too. You can make a new one."

He held her hand tightly and she held his. Outside Tony Spina drove to work—in the old world. But he and Millie had something to do too—build a new world for their later years.

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Lesson 12: Age-Stereotypes: Accurate or Inaccurate?

Goal: To identify and test the validity of pervasive age-stereotypes.

Objectives: -- To define the term age-stereotype based on information acquired from previous activities.

-- To test the validity of common age-stereotypes by examining factual data.

-- To summarize and categorize age-stereotypes encountered in the unit's activities.

Background Information:

Stereotyping is the act of categorically assigning certain attributes to a human group which level individual differences and are based on insufficient knowledge. Ageism(age-stereotyping) refers to a specific type of stereotyping, that is, stereotyping based on a person's age. Stereotypes can be either positive or negative. An example of a positive age-stereotype is assuming that people become serene in old age. A negative stereotype is found in the assumption that old age inevitably leads to senility.

The harmful effects of stereotyping are numerous. Stereotypic misrepresentations impede communication between individuals. They result in categorical judgments based on circumstance, not individual merit. Stereotyping fails to acknowledge the diversity of the older population and the process of aging. It may affect the older person's self-concept, their adaptation to aging and may detrimentally influence the quality of care and services available to older people. Due to the prevalence of age-stereotyping, "older Americans are kept from participating actively -- as wage earners, as volunteer workers, as neighbors, as sources of wisdom --in the mainstream of American life"(NCOA, ND:6).

Throughout this unit various stereotypes associated with growing old have been presented. This activity summarizes and tests the validity of common age-stereotypes.

Materials and Equipment Needed:

- Student handouts, "Good News About Senility," "Senior Syndromes," "The Myth of the Twilight Years," "Physical Changes of Aging"
- Blackboard

Procedures:

1. Conduct a discussion on the meaning of age-stereotyping. The following questions serve as a discussion guide.

What do you think?

1. What is a stereotype? Who is subject to stereotyping?
2. Can you think of any stereotypes about women? different ethnic groups or races? any other groups?
3. Based on your general definition of stereotypes, what do you think age-stereotyping means?
4. Can you think of any stereotypes referring to age groups other than the elderly, e.g. children, teenagers, middle-aged people?
5. Why do we frequently stereotype other people?
6. In what ways can stereotyping be harmful?

2. Divide students into four groups. Tell them that each group will examine a particular category of age-stereotyping in greater detail in order to test the validity of common stereotypes. Each group should receive a different set of the listed handouts. Direct students in each group to read the article and note any information that dispels or confirms a common age-stereotype. After groups have completed the task, summarize their findings by listing the age-stereotypes and next to them the factual data supporting or not supporting the stereotypes. For example:

Inevitable senility	Small % of elderly are irreversibly senile; much senility reversible

3. This activity is a follow-up to the previous activity. Ask students if they can cite any other age-stereotypes based on other unit activities or personal knowledge. List all identified stereotypes on the blackboard (you can begin this process during the previous activity). Then ask students to place the stereotypes into categories, e.g. physical, mental, social, etc. (Have students suggest their own categories).

What did you find out?

1. Which categories contain the most stereotypes? the least?
2. Are the stereotypes mostly positive or negative?

What do you think?

1. What do these stereotypes reveal about our society's attitudes toward growing old and old people?
2. What can you do to help remove common age-stereotypes?

GOOD NEWS ABOUT SENILITY

BY ARTHUR S. FREESE

The latest medical and scientific knowledge can relieve one of humankind's greatest fears—the dread of senility, of loss of mind and memory.

A survey of recent studies points up two facts:

1. A great deal of what gets labeled "senility" is now often being reversed.

2. The belief that senility is as natural as wrinkles or gray hair is now seen as gross error.

Researchers reassure us too that memory loss is not a natural aging effect, as long assumed.

America tends to view its elderly as a group of uniform all-alikes. As a result, all aging is seen as a kind of senescence invariably combined with senility, a state in which supposedly rapidly dwindling mental powers cause intellectual confusion, lack of self-care and personal hygiene, loss of contact with the world about one, unpredictable mood swings, etc.

In fact, this picture is a matter of taking the effects of a rather rare, irreversible brain disease and seeing it as the natural accompaniment of age. The truth is this:

Similar symptoms are nearly as likely to appear in middle-aged people as in those over 65. They are essentially the result of a brain disease first described by Alois Alzheimer, a German neurologist, in a woman who died at age 51 from what has become known as Alzheimer's Disease.

So the fact is that the aged have no reason statistically to fear senility today any more than they fear other uncommon, destructive, poorly understood diseases.

First, let's look at what senility actually is. Let's see how much of what is called senility is not that at all but is both preventable and curable, and how little danger it actually represents to those over 65.

When people see an older person experiencing memory loss, however slight, or showing signs of irritability or confusion, their nearly automatic reaction is, "Aha—senile!"

But what does "senility" really mean?

Dr. Sinex insists: "I never use the word 'senile' because you have to be more specific; I prefer to talk about 'dementia'."

"Dementia" is a medical term meaning deterioration in mental or intellectual capacity and its symptoms are those usually ascribed to senility. True senility is dementia, with its mental confusion, alterations in consciousness, memory loss, difficulty in grasping what is going on about one, etc.

Dr. Butler is concerned because "senility is a very confusing term with no real medical legitimacy. As used in an everyday manner by doctors and public alike, it covers the waterfront. It conveys such negative stereotypes as irreversibility, futility, hopelessness. If I had my way, we wouldn't even use the word."

Dr. Libow says: "The word frightens everybody--a lay term, it doesn't exist in medical literature. We can use 'senility' to mean the mental decline that occurs in a small percentage of older people, not in everyone."

The exact incidence of senility, or Alzheimer's Disease, is still unknown; as NIA Director Butler explains it, "The proper data base is just not there." However, a variety of sources indicate very roughly the dimensions of the problem.

Dr. Sinex estimates that the risk at birth of becoming demented in old age is small--"probably 1.8 percent for males and 2.3 percent for females."

There is also a condition Dr. Libow has named "pseudosenility," in which senilitylike symptoms are produced by a variety of physical disorders and even depression. This false senility can be successfully treated and cured, so the difference between the two is vital.

Experts like Butler and Libow point out that barely 5 percent of Americans over the age of 65 are in nursing homes--and only about half of those are senile. (It's likely that others with milder cases are still living in the community, but no figures are available.)

As director of NIA, Dr. Butler is probably best situated to know the latest figures. He says: "As an awfully rough guess, it's possible that as many as maybe a million, or one out of every 23 older Americans, may have some form of intellectual dysfunction that might get labeled 'senility.' However, one out of 23 is far fewer than the public's general image."

Dr. Butler says other figures indicate that, of existing cases of senility, "maybe 50 percent are not reversible."

The reversible senilities are what Dr. Libow calls pseudosenilities. He uses the phrase, he says, "merely to point out to the physician that when we see an older individual who looks disheveled, has some impairment of memory, thought or orientation, who wanders off, and the like--it may not be senility; it may be something that looks like senility but it is treatable and often reversible."

The causes of pseudosenility are many, as NIA Director Butler points out:

"You can name 100 or more conditions that can cause it--anemia, dehydration, congestive heart failure, mild infections, heat. Drugs are a very common cause and should be used with extraordinary care by older persons."

Another frequent cause is depression. But whatever the cause, it is essential, the experts say, that pseudosenility be diagnosed and treated promptly. If it isn't, the changes that take place may cause permanent injury to the brain.

The lesson is clear. Any older person showing senilitylike signs should be seen immediately by a competent physician.

Gray hair is natural
part of aging:
memory loss is not

Now let's investigate the cause of senility. Dr. Libow explains it thus:

"Senility is not a natural phenomenon, an inevitable aspect of human aging like graying of the hair. Senility is a mysterious disease and its origin is unknown. Not clearly related to hardening of the arteries, it could be due to anything—a virus, a metabolic error, a chemical defect. It occurs most frequently in the elderly because there's something about being old that allows certain diseases to manifest themselves; for example, a 40-year-old who falls isn't likely to fracture a hip; that same person at 80 is."

There's one more point to consider, and it's important:

In senility, the most ovbious and often the first symptom is loss of memory—but not all forgetfulness in the elderly is senility. Dr. Steven H. Zarit, professor of psychology at USC's Andrus Gerontology Center in Los Angeles, has been studying memory in healthy older people and finds that old age does not affect memory to a significant degree:

"What happens is that when they forget something, many older people say, 'I must be getting old.' The younger person who does the same thing shrugs and ignores it."

What emerges from what Dr. Butler calls the "bits and pieces" we are beginning to find out about senility?

Clearly, many medical puzzles still remain to be solved. But from what we have learned so far, the news indeed is good- and it promises to get better.

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SENIOR SYNDROMES

MARGIE CASADY

If life for senior citizens isn't a downhill ride, then what is it? After a lot of study, it appears difficult to say, except that it isn't what we thought it was.

Margie Casady reports on the behavioral sciences from Del Mar, California.

No matter what you call them, old people, old folks or senior citizens, most labels conjure up images of senility, poor health, loneliness and misery. Emerson spoke of the aged as "rags and relics," and Shakespeare was no more complimentary when he said the twilight years usher in "a second childishness and mere oblivion. Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything." What Simone de Beauvoir calls the "inescapable decline" is not a pretty sight, and most of us dread our own impending deterioration. Researchers, however, are finding that most of our fears are based on outdated beliefs that are more fiction than fact.

Over the past decade, gerontology, the study of aging, has received the attention of social scientists who are studying large, representative groups of older persons. Their work provides the first real insight into the aging process. Bernice L. Neugarten, a psychologist and former chairperson of the Committee on Human Development at the University of Chicago, says, "These studies go far toward exploding some of our outmoded images. For example, old persons do not become isolated and neglected by their families, are not dumped into mental hospitals by cruel or indifferent children, are not necessarily lonely or desolate if they live alone. Few of them ever show overt signs of mental deterioration or senility, and only a small proportion ever become mentally ill." Even retirement does not deserve its bad name. According to Neugarten, more and more older people are choosing to retire early. She points out that in one recent national study, three out of four of the older persons were satisfied or very satisfied with their lives since retirement.

The evidence is clear: life for senior citizens is not a downhill ride. But then what is it? Henry Maas and Joseph Kuypers of the Institute of Human Development at the University of California in Berkeley found that we can't really say. It's as difficult to buttonhole lifestyles and personalities of older persons as to guess at those of younger individuals.

The two psychologists came to this conclusion after analyzing data from a longitudinal study initiated in the '30s when their Bay Area subjects were young parents, and continued into the late '60s when they were in their early 70s. Their most consistent finding was diversity.

In their book From Thirty to Seventy, the researchers describe the wide variety of interests, capacities, needs, lifestyles and personalities of these California septogenarians. Among their 142 subjects, they found at least 10 different lifestyles and seven personality types. The men fell into four lifestyle groups; the women, into six.

Almost half of the men were homebodies whose lives revolved around wives, children and grandchildren. Other men also busied themselves at home, but in solitary pursuits such as carpentry. The socially active grandfathers were also politically active and concerned about social issues. Eight ailing older men withdrew from life.

The primary life focus of one-fourth of the grandmothers was their husbands, while others, mostly widows who had few interests of their own, became involved in their adult childrens' activities. A third group occupied themselves by visiting a large network of friends and relatives. Twelve women who were still employed put work first: 11 were active in community groups; a dozen were sickly, emotionally distraught individuals who, like their male counterparts, withdrew from life. "The diversity of the 10 different lifestyles seems limited only by the size and nature of our panel," report the two psychologists.

Further, they found no relationship between personality type and lifestyle. A woman who centered her life around her husband was as apt to be dependent as independent, aggressive as passive, person-oriented as socially retiring. And a conventional, conservative man might center his life around his hobbies, his family or his job. "If anything," says Kuypers, "we become more diverse as we age."

These findings have important implications for social planning. Kuypers insists that basic policy must provide different alternatives for different types of old people. Choices about retiring or tapering off from work are essential. He believes a variety of living arrangements should be available to older citizens. Interestingly, not one of the individuals in the study chose to live in a high-rise apartment complex or other age-segregated community, the type of housing most often provided and built by government and private industry.

The most pertinent influence on life in old age appeared to be lifestyle in early adulthood. Maas and Kuypers found that our lives at 70 have a lot more to do with our lives at 30 than with the onset of old age. "We don't lose our connection to the past and suddenly become someching or somebody else," says Kuypers. Women who were depressed, fearful and unsure of themselves at 70 were similarly afflicted at 30. Those who were outgoing, busy and cheerful in early adulthood were happy, active septogenarians. And sickly older persons also had ailments when they were younger.

Moreover, there was a strong relationship found between poor physical health and emotional problems. In every case where an old person withdrew from society, the researchers found that he or she also had physical infirmities. "Being in good health was crucial to allowing old people to lead the type of life they wanted," sayd Kuypers,

adding, "early adult health care may pay multiple dividends for old age--not only for health status, but also for aging personality dispositions and aging lifestyles."

As previously mentioned, the best predictor of an elderly man's lifestyle was his lifestyle as a young man. While changes in environment, usually made to accommodate the husband's needs, sometimes led to radical changes in lifestyle for women, men's lifestyles remained fairly constant.

Those who centered their lives around hobbies in old age had been dissatisfied with their lack of free time as young men. For these men, marriage had never been central in their lives. Still relatively uninvolved in their marriages as oldsters, and now retired, they finally had the free time to pursue new activities--alone and with vigor.

The central feature in the lives of older men whom Maas and Kuypers called "unwell disengaged" was their poor health and social withdrawal. At 30, they tended to be irritable men who fought with their wives over religion and leisure activities. They were tense, nervous and explosive. And they were sickly. They were much the same at 70.

The most successful young men, who were satisfied with their social status, finances and jobs, were relaxed, controlled, removed, interpersonally cool and the most affluent of the lot. As older adults, they maintained their self-satisfaction and aloofness. Although they always had a large network of friends, they had few intimate relationships. In their old age, they continued to spend little time with their wives. But there was no indication that these couples were unhappy with their "separate" lives.

Older men who centered their lives around their families were an enigma. There was little in their early adulthood to predict their later family orientation. They were rich and not so rich, of high social status and low, energetic or lazy, continued to work or had retired early. The only traits that related to their lifestyle in old age were personal ones. Since early adulthood, these men had been more affectionate and demonstrative than the others. They were less likely to withdraw from marital conflict, and their marriages were more important to them than to the other men.

The idea that old age brings with it massive physical and psychological decline and drastic changes in lifestyle simply doesn't square with the facts. A majority of old people continue to lead rewarding, interesting lives. Continuity, however, is not synonymous with sameness. As men and women move from the work world into retirement, as their children leave the nest to start their own families and careers, older adults have the opportunity to travel, to pursue new interests and hobbies. As Maas and Kuypers conclude, "Old age can provide a second and better chance at life." On life's merry-go-round, the brass ring may take a long time coming around. When it does, grab it.

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THE MYTH OF THE TWILIGHT YEARS

Paul B. Baltes and K. Warner Schaie

News reporters never tire of pointing out that Golda Meir works 20-hour days, yet is in her mid-70s, and a grandmother. Time, in a recent story on William O. Douglas, noted that the blue eyes of the 75-year-old Justice "are as keen and alert as ever. So, too, is [his] intellect." This sort of well-intended but patronizing compliment betrays a widespread assumption that intelligence normally declines in advanced adulthood and old age, and that people like Meir and Douglas stand out as exceptions.

In our opinion, general intellectual decline in old age is largely a myth. During the past 10 years, we and our colleagues (particularly G. V. Labouvie and J. R. Nesselroade) have worked to gain a better understanding of intelligence in the aged. Our findings challenge the stereotyped view, and promote a more optimistic one. We have discovered that the old man's boast, "I'm just as good as I ever was," may be true, after all.

THE DATA ON DECLINE. For a long time, the textbook view coincided with the everyday notion that as far as intelligence is concerned, what goes up must come down. The research that supported this view was cross-sectional in nature. The investigator administered intelligence tests to people of various ages at a given point in time, and compared the performance levels of the different age groups. Numerous studies of this type conducted during the '30s, '40s and '50s

led researchers to believe that intelligence increases up to early adulthood, reaches a plateau that lasts for about 10 years, and begins to decline in a regular fashion around the fourth decade of life.

The first doubts arose when the results of longitudinal studies began to be available. In this type of study, the researcher observes a single group of subjects for a period of time, often extending over many years, and examines their performance at different ages. Early longitudinal studies suggested that intelligence during maturity and old age did not decline as soon as people had originally assumed.

As better intelligence tests became available, researchers began to realize that different intellectual measures might show different rates of decline. On measures of vocabulary and other skills reflecting educational experience, individuals seemed to maintain their adult level of functioning into the sixth, and even the seventh decade.

There is no strong age-related change in cognitive flexibility. For the most important dimension, crystallized intelligence, and for visualization as well, we see a systematic <u>increase</u> in scores for the various age groups, right into old age. Even people over 70 improved from the first testing to the second.

INTELLECTUAL GENERATION GAP. In cross-sectional studies, people who differ in age also differ in generation, since they were born in different years. This means that any measured differences in

intelligence could reflect either age or generation differences, or both. Our study, however, allowed us to compare people from different generations at the same ages, because we tested people at two different points in time. For instance, we could compare subjects who were 50 in 1956 with subjects who were 50 in 1963. Our statistical analysis revealed that the differences between scores were due mainly to generational differences, not to chronological age. In other words, the important factor was the year a subject was born, rather than his age at the time of testing. Apparently, the measured intelligence of the population is increasing. The earlier findings of general intellectual decline over the individual life span were largely an artifact of methodology. On at least some dimensions of intelligence, particularly the crystallized type, people of average health can expect to maintain or even increase their level of performance into old age.

At present, we can only speculate about the reasons for generational differences in intelligence. We believe the answer lies in the substance, method and length of education received by different generations. When we consider the history of our educational institutions, and census data on the educational levels attained by members of specific generations, it seems fair to assume that the older people in our study were exposed to shorter periods of formal education. Furthermore, their education probably relied more heavily on principles of memorization, and less heavily on those of problem solving.

However, there are other possibilities that must be reckoned with before we can offer a more definite interpretation. Members of different generations may differ in their sophistication in test-taking or their willingness to volunteer responses. They may differ in the extent to which they have been encouraged to achieve intellectually. And tests developed to measure the abilities of one generation may be invalid for another.

AGED-BIASED IQ TESTS. The nature of the tests used to assess intelligence may also contribute to the apparent decline that is sometimes observed. Sidney L. Pressey (who now lives as an octogenarian in a home for the elderly and continues to make occasional but insightful contributions to psychology) first pointed out that the concept of intelligence, as well as the instruments to measure it, are defined in terms of abilities most important during youth and early adulthood. This is not really surprising, since IQ tests came into existence for the purpose of predicting school performance. The format and content of these tests may simply be inappropriate for tapping the potential wisdom of the aged. For example, older people tend to do relatively poorly on tests employing technical language such as the terminology of physics or computer programing. Their performance is better if items are worded in terms of everyday experiences.

Another problem is the distinction between a person's competence and his actual performance. Handicaps that have nothing to do with

intrinsic ability may affect the way a person does on a test. For instance, Baltes and Carol A. Furry recently demonstrated that the aged are especially susceptible to the effects of fatigue; pretest fatigue considerably lowered the scores of older subjects, but did not affect the performance of younger ones.

Recent work on age stereotypes indicates that some young people hold a negative view of old age. These views may influence them to withdraw reinforcements for competence in the elderly, or even to punish such competence. Aging persons may in time come to accept the stereotypes, view themselves as deficient, and put aside intellectual performance as a personal goal. In the process, the intallectual deficit becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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PHYSICAL CHANGES OF AGING *

The body begins to age almost as soon as it stops growing. The visible signs of aging include the appearance of wrinkled, rough skin with dark spots; dry, thin hair; and stooped or shortened posture from compressed spinal discs.

As one ages, the skin, blood vessels, tendons, and connective tissue lose their elasticity. This is the reason for the hardening of blood vessels and the stiffening of joints. A great many of the physical problems associated with senescence (the process of aging) are the result of the general decline of the circulatory system. The heart pumps less effectively, and reduced blood supply impairs mental acuity, interferes with balance, and reduces the effectiveness of the muscles and body organs. Worst of all, the probability of heart attacks and strokes increases.

Circulatory problems aside, as one ages the muscles lose their strength so that endurance and coordination become more difficult. The lungs, kidneys, and other organs also decline. Brain functions decline, though less dramatically. Happily, the degree to which one's body loses its vitality over the years can be influenced by the way one lives: People who have been physically and mentally active throughout their lives remain more vigorous and alert in their later years. It is not unusual for old people to remain mentally bright right up to the ends of their lives.

The world looks, sounds and tastes different to the elderly. The yellowing lens in the eye filters out the blue, violet, and green spectrum of colors, so that a room decorated in blues and greens could seem drab and gray. It is easier to see the bright colors - yellow, red, and orange. The lens also stiffens, making it harder to focus the eye. Because only one-third as much light enters the older person's eye, he needs brighter light to read and work by.

As senescence proceeds, hearing declines; higher frequencies become inaudible. It takes only a mild deterioration in hearing acuity to make speech difficult to interpret. Hearing difficulties are the most prevalent disability among the elderly.

Food may not taste the same to the old person, either. With only one-sixth as many taste buds as younger people, the elderly tend to prefer more seasoned, tarter foods. Touch is less sensitive too.

The aging body is not an insensitive body, however. There is still plenty of ability to enjoy life - if there is something to enjoy. As Morton Puner observes: "Bifocals, hearing aids, canes

and all - when away from the drabness of 'normal' old age, they will be as excited and lively, and as noisy, as teen-agers on a spree....An older pleasure seeker makes up for sensory loss by greater emotional response, his appreciation heightened by maturity and the fact that he knows his time is short and that there is so much beauty and novelty still to be shared."

Sexuality is equated with youth. Sad jokes are made about the presumed difficulties of sex among oldsters. Here again, the difference is overstated. Masters and Johnson feel there is no reason that mutually rewarding sexual activity cannot be enjoyed by elderly couples. The amount and kinds of sexual activity one enjoys tend to stay the same throughout life. If sexual behavior declines, it may be more for social than for physical reasons.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS **

1. Most women are widows by age 65, but a majority of men are not widowers until age 85.

2. Most older people are part of an extensive and complex semi-extended family system. Only five percent have no surviving kin at all.

3. About 90 percent of older people live less than an hour's trip from at least one of their children. Contact is frequent.

4. A happy relationship between older parents and children depends largely on the older person's ability to manage gracefully by himself.

5. Relationships with brothers and sisters are often reactivated in old age and take on new life.

6. Next to one's spouse, friends are the greatest source of companionship in old age. Friendship is a good index of the older person's emotional and mental health.

7. In general, older people are disposed toward a high degree of political participation. They are more likely to vote, to be informed about issues, and to hold political opinions.

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*Excerpted from Growing Old, Gordon Moss and Walter Moss, Eds. New York: Pocket Books, 1975:30-33. Reprint permission granted by Pocket Books 1978.

**Concepts and Issues in Aging, James D. Manney (Institute of Gerontology, University of Michigan). Reprinted with permission.

Lesson 13: A Better Life for Older Americans in the Future?

Goal: To suggest methods for improving the quality of life for older Americans.

Objectives: -- To hypothesize on the roles and conditions of the aged in the future based on background information.

-- To suggest ways of improving the quality of life for older Americans in specified areas of concern.

-- To clarify one's feelings about growing older by responding to a statement about aging.

Background Information.

Increased awareness regarding the plight of older Americans should be followed by attempts to remediate the conditions which make aging a difficult process. This lesson focuses on advocacy - how can the quality of life for older people be improved?

Materials and Equipment Needed:

- Student handout, "Over 65 Set Growing 1,600 A Day in U.S."
- Student handout, "The Aged of Tomorrow"

Procedures:

1. Distribute copies of "Over 65 Set Growing 1,600 A Day in U.S." Direct students to read the article (perhaps even having students read it orally) and use it as a springboard for the discussion. Initiate the discussion by telling students that throughout the unit we have concentrated on the plight of older Americans today. But the older population is not static, it is constantly changing. So too are the needs and characteristics of older people. By the year 2015, your students will join the ranks of the over sixty-five age group. How do they forsee life in the future for the "new" older Americans - themselves?

What do you think?

1. Hypothesize on how the characteristics (e.g. economic, health, educational attainment, etc.) and roles of older people will be different in the year 2000.
2. How will increased numbers of older people in the future affect their quality of life?

3. What new problems do you forsee for older Americans in the year 2000? what improvements?

2. Divide students into five or more groups. Inform each group that they are to propose solutions for improving the quality of life for older Americans in the area assigned. Encourage creativity and innovative suggestions. Possible areas of concern include: housing, transportation, health, employment, attitudes, economic conditions and social activities. Direct each group to note their proposals. After the groups have completed their task, have each group share their ideas with the rest of the class.

What do you think?

1. How feasible (economically, politically, attitudinally, etc.) is your proposal? How might it be implemented?
2. What can you do to improve the quality of life for older Americans -- your future selves?

3. Distribute copies of the student handout, "The Aged of Tomorrow." Direct students to write a response to this statement. (Responses could be written in several different forms, e.g. a letter to older people, a poem, stream of consciousness reflections, etc.).

OVER 65 SET
GROWING 1,600 A DAY IN U.S.

ANN BLACKMAN

WASHINGTON (AP)--Get ready for a shock, America: You're getting a little older every day. Soon you will need more hospital units for the elderly, more doctors and nurses trained to care for them.

You will be under pressure to change your Social Security and pension systems, to reconsider the way you force people to retire.

Your swelling population of old people will press you increasingly to create new jobs for them, both private enterprise and government programs that draw on the skills of retired professionals.

They will seek government programs to retrain them for new jobs and will be banging increasingly on the doors of your colleges and universities, even as the number of traditional college-age youth drops off.

These are no idle predictions. They are based on headcounts of people already born, plus predictions in present trends in births and deaths.

Today there are 1,600 more Americans over 65 than there were yesterday. Tomorrow the number will grow again, and by the year 2020--when the post-World War II baby boom crop passes age 65--there will be an estimated 43 million older Americans, almost twice as many as there are now.

About one in 10 Americans is over 65 today. But if young people continue their present taste for late marriage and small families, the year 2020 will see at least one in six Americans over 65. If advanced medical techniques conquer such killers as cancer, heart attack and strokes, the ratio could reach one in five.

And because women probably will continue to live longer than men, the 65 and older population of the future will be largely female, most of them widows.

Strains on the Social Security system are among the most pressing problems created by this "gray revolution."

Under the present system, benefits to retired people are paid from the payroll taxes of those presently in the work force. That means that today's young and middle-aged are putting money aside, not for their own retirement, but for those now retired.

But who will pay the retirement benefits of the baby boom generation?

Chances are it will still be the young and middle-aged, but it may cost them twice as much as it does now. The Social Security Administration estimates that in the year 2020, there will be 2.2 persons working for every one drawing retirement benefits. That compares to 3.2 workers for every beneficiary today.

Last year the administration estimated that by 2025, each worker may have to contribute 10.2 percent of his salary to Social Security, compared to the 5.4 percent he throws in today. Under present law, the employer contributes the same amount to the system.

Such a move is likely to be unpopular with the working force. But political pressure from pensioners, already strong, will increase as their numbers grow.

Such conflicting pressures may increasingly pit the generations against each other, said Dr. Robert N. Butler. His examination of the status of today's elderly is outlined in his recently published Prize-winning book, "Why Survive? Being Old in America."

Butler, who was recently appointed the first head of the new National Institute on Aging within the National Institutes of Health, advocates having the federal government contribute to the Social Security system, something that has not been done in the past. This would have the advantage of taking relatively more money from people of higher income than is now the case, but would still be taxing the productive sector of society to pay the pensions of the retired.

A more fundamental change, Butler suggests, would be to find ways for older people to remain longer in the work force.

"What we are studying here," Butler said, "is not just older people the way they are now, but older people as they can become. We have to integrate them into the work force and keep them younger."

Because older people have more medical problems than the population as a whole, more facilities will be needed to care for the growing aging population, argues Dr. George Maddox, director of the Duke University Center for the Aging in Durham, N.C.

"We have contrived a system of medicine that does magnificent things for terrible problems but doesn't deal with chronic illness," Maddox said. "We require pitifully low standards for nursing homes . . . The American medical system is geared to acute and speciality medicine, and the biggest problems of old people aren't characterized that way. We have no cleverness to deal with the medical problems of late life."

For example, Maddox said the country spends much more money on spectacular medical achievements like heart transplants and artificial kidney treatment than it does on preventive care, especially for older people.

"We don't care for them until they're sick enough to go to the hospital," Maddox said, "and all that does is raise costs."

Maddox said that medical institutions must be encouraged to include the physical and psychological problems of the elderly in their courses, that doctors must be encouraged to study them, that semiprofessional people must be trained to deliver health care in the home.

Besides changes in how it administers medical care to the elderly, the country will have to consider what kinds of housing its old people will live in, whether there will be more planned towns or if an effort will be made to integrate the elderly more into the community. There may be a demand for more one-level apartments.

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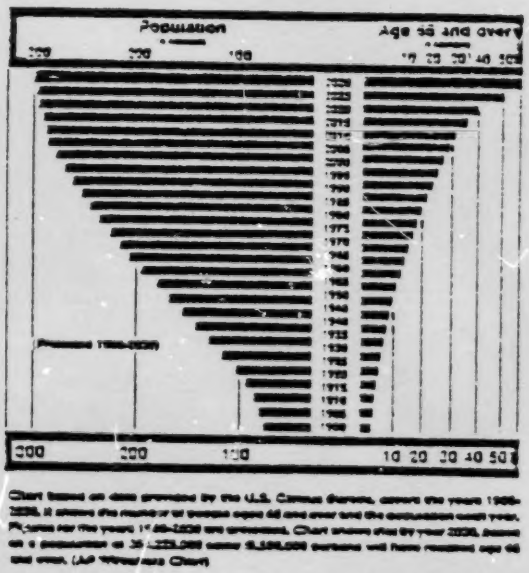
Experts on the elderly say communities should draw more on the professional skills of retired people, such as having retired lawyers offer legal services to the aging, retired doctors and nurses offer care in the home and retired teachers give courses in the schools.

Educators say that there will be more and more elderly signing up for courses in the colleges and universities, that a semester of French literature or a course in art history will become a recreational as well as a learning experience.

One must ask how all these changes will manifest themselves. One way will be in the political system. Voting records show that older persons are much more likely to register and vote than younger ones.

Figures from the 1974 congressional elections show that about 70 percent of those over 65 reported registering and voting, compared to 41 percent of those between 18 and 24.

"There is no complete agreement on ideas, but if there is a large proportion of people with demands and dreams, they will have political clout," said political analyst Richard Scammon.



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THE AGED OF TOMORROW

Directions: Read the following statement and then write a response. Your response can be in narrative form, a letter addressed to older people, a poem, random reflections on the statement, or any other written form of your choice.

"When we ask for a chance to live our old age in comfort, creativity and usefulness, we ask it not for ourselves only, but for you. We are not a special interest group. We are your parents and grandparents. We are your roots. You are our continuity. What we gain is your inheritance"(from Everybody's Studying Us by Irene Paull).

AGING IN AMERICA:
A TEST OF CONCEPTS AND ISSUES

Use the table below to answer questions 1-3.

Table 1 Older Population in the Twentieth Century (65+)

Year	Total (000's)	% of Total Population	Men (000's)	Women (000's)	Ratio Women/Men
1900	3,080	4.1	1,555	1,525	98/100
1930	6,634	5.4	3,325	3,309	100/100
1970	19,972	9.8	8,367	11,605	139/100
1976	22,934	10.7	9.364	13,571	145/100
2000	31,822	12.2-12.9	12,717	19,105	150/100

T F 1. Since 1900, there have been more women over age 65 than men.

T F 2. The number and proportion of people over age 65 is projected to decline before the end of the century.

T F 3. The proportion of people aged 65 and over has more than doubled since 1900.

4. Why is the age 65 and over age category increasing in numbers?

Read the case study that follows and then answer questions 5-8.*

Now 81, Joseph Bartlett could look back on a long and useful life. He was living in a dusty Oklahoma town where he had lived since leaving farming and becoming a barber. He had been present at the opening of Indian Territory to white settlers and during the later oil boom. He had lost

his wife and his only son ten years before. Since he had been self-employed he had no Social Security and was forced to turn to welfare. He was without transportation in the rural village. There were no social services, and medical care was inaccessible. His close friends and family had died, and he was too proud to ask other townspeople for the help he needed. He admitted to living in pain for a number of years but declared he would never burden anyone--"I will make do for myself."

*Excerpted from Robert Butler's Why Survive? p. 4.

5. What problems did Joseph Bartlett face?

6. Why did he not seek assistance?

7. What would you have done in a similar situation?

8. How typical do you think these problems are for old people? Explain.

9. When is someone old? Explain.

10. What are the advantages of using age 65 as the definition of old age? What are the disadvantages?

11. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Explain your response.
"The role of oldness is not biologically fixed, it is something prescribed by society, and our society prescribes it foully."

12. What is meant by age-grading or age-stratification? Provide an example of age-grading.

13. Are you for or against mandatory retirement of people when they reach a certain age? Present arguments to support your position.

14. Define the term stereotype. Provide an example of a common stereotype about older people and present information that supports or does not support this stereotype.

OTHER TEACHER RESOURCES

1. Butler, Robert N. Why Survive? Being Old in America. New York: N.Y.: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1975.

   An excellent Pulitzer prize winning account of growing old in America. Each chapter deals with an important concern of older people, e.g. senility, victimization, mandatory retirement, economic needs, pensions, etc. The appendices provide lists of programs, organizations and literature dealing with the elderly.

2. Cameron, Marcia J. Views of Aging: A Teacher's Guide. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute of Gerontology, 1978.

   A helpful resource for teachers interested in teaching about aging. It presents suggestions for teaching the topic from a personal, environmental or societal perspective. Interdisciplinary units and special aging topics are included. The appendices contain a wide range of teaching resources.

3. Hunter, Woodrow W. Preparation for Retirement. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute of Gerontology, 1976.

   This book is divided into two sections. The first section discusses concerns pertinent to retirement. Part two includes several short stories dealing with different retirement problems.

4. Huyck, Margaret H. Growing Older: What You Need to Know About Aging. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974.

   Discusses the aging process and problems related to it. Informative and interesting.

5. Jacobs, H. Lee. Youth Looks at Aging. Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa, 1969.

   A three week unit on aging designed for the secondary level. The author presents 18 commonly asked questions about aging and proceeds to suggest student activities designed to seek the answers. A helpful bibliography is included.

6. Moss, Gordon and Moss, Walter, ed. Growing Old. New York, N.Y.: Pocket Books, 1975.

   A very informative collection of readings and discussions on issues of aging. It discusses characteristics of the elderly, problems and concerns of older people, and age-stereotyping. Also a good student text or reference.

7. Harris, Charles. Fact Book on Aging: A Profile of America's Older Population. Wash., D.C.: National Council on the Aging, 1978.

The most up to date reference currently available. Presents profiles of the elderly in the following areas: demography, income, employment, physical health, mental health, housing, transportation and criminal victimization.

8. Harris, Louis and Associates, Inc. The Myth and Reality of Aging in America. Wash., D.C.: National Council on the Aging, Inc., 1975.

Reports the findings of a national poll assessing the attitudes of different age groups toward growing old in America. The most comprehensive collection of attitudinal data available. Excellent.

9. Pratt, Francis E. Teaching About Aging. Boulder, Colorado: Social Science Education Consortium, 1977.

The author discusses the rationale for teaching about aging, how the topic fits into the social sciences and the broader curriculum, and strategies for teaching about aging at the secondary level.

10. Saul, Shura. Aging: An Album of People Growing Old. New York, N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1974.

A collection of 40 vignettes about growing old. All are based on true cases and bridge the gap between theory and practice in the field of social gerontology.

11. Smith, Gary R. A Comparative View of Aging. Denver, Colorado: Center for Teaching International Relations, N.D.

Presents a series of teaching activities aimed at comparing aging in our society with aging in other cultures. Lessons include extensive teacher directions and student handouts. An excellent teacher's guide.